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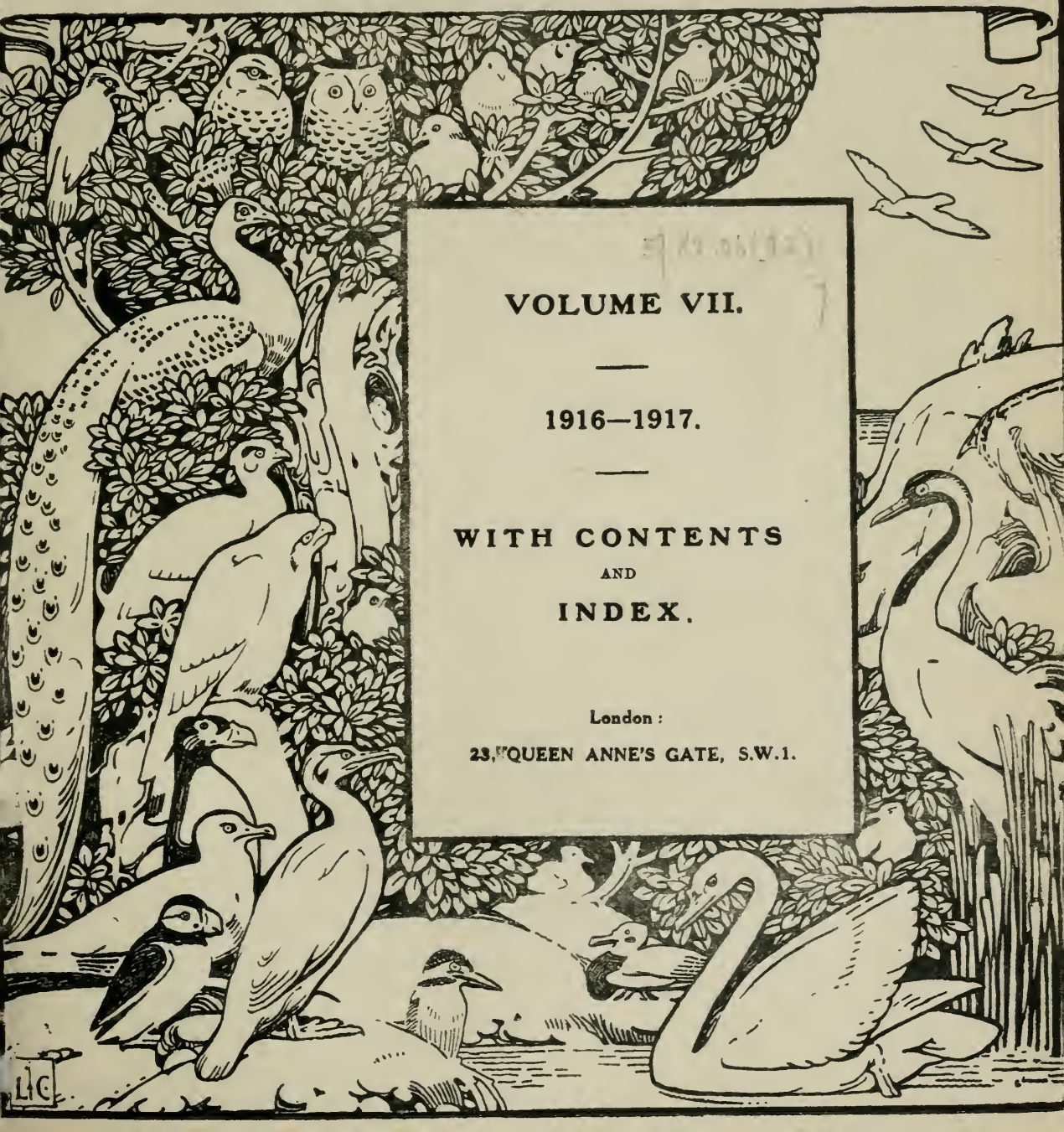
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BIRD NOTES & NEWS

THE JOURNAL OF THE ROYAL SOCIETY
FOR THE PROTECTION OF BIRDS.



59.42.06.1927

VOLUME VII.

—
1916—1917.
—

WITH CONTENTS
AND
INDEX.

London :
23, QUEEN ANNE'S GATE, S.W.1.

20 81946 May 8

The Royal Society for the Protection of Birds.

FOUNDED
1889.

23, QUEEN ANNE'S GATE, LONDON, S.W.

Incorporated under Royal Charter, 1904.

ANY person interested in promoting the objects of the Society and willing to abide by the Regulations may be enrolled as follows :—

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Bird Notes & News

ISSUED QUARTERLY BY THE ROYAL SOCIETY
:: :: FOR THE PROTECTION OF BIRDS :: ::

Vol. VII.]

SPRING, 1916.

[No. 1.]

Birds in the War Area.

IN THE NORTH OF FRANCE.

THE following interesting observations on "Birds at the Front" in France are contributed to the *Times* (March 2, 1916) by an officer whose name it is not permitted to give, but who is related to one of the R.S.P.B. Vice-Presidents.

"A summer and winter spent at the front, and at the back of the front, have proved to me that the north of France is no birdless region. The noise and bustle of war do not drive away the birds, even from the trenches, and I can remember no nesting season which introduced more birds unknown to me than last summer. Sitting still is a common military manoeuvre, and one can watch birds common in England as well as in France, and others which seldom cross the Channel.

"In March and April I was stationed at a small château in very open country with a minute copse behind it. This copse about the end of March was crowded for a fortnight with Redwings and Fieldfares, as well as scattered individuals of other species. A sprinkling of Golden-crested Wrens kept arriving, resting a short while, and passing on, and one morning a single very tired-looking hen Fire-crest took possession of the one fir tree there.

SUMMER MIGRANTS—THE WARBLERS.

"The first summer migrants to arrive, and these only in small numbers, were the Chiffchaffs on March 22, and they remained throughout the summer the commonest of all the many warblers.

"The only English warblers I did not see were the Dartford and the Wood-Warbler, but Nightingales, Blackcaps, Garden Warblers, Sedge-, Reed-, Grasshopper Warblers all duly came, and with them three Warblers new to me—the Marsh-, the Icterine, and the great Reed-Warbler. I first identified the Icterine on the ramparts of Ypres. He sang every morning from dawn till 10 a.m., and at intervals in the afternoon, and he did not mind an audience within a few feet of his head. Just below him, on a small tongue of land jutting into the moat, were one pair of Blue Tits and family, two pairs of Reed-Warblers, one pair of Blackcaps, one pair of Garden Warblers, numbers of Greenfinches, and, as I suspected, the Icterine's wife. In the reeds of the moat was a colony of Great Reed Warblers. I became intimately acquainted with their domestic affairs. The Blackcaps and Garden Warblers had had their first nest blown sideways by shells, and the latter never tried to nest again; but the Blackcaps rebuilt within 10 ft. of their old nest, though the three eggs the lady laid were as white as a wood pigeon's. The cock did quite his share of incubation, and neither bird

moved when they were shelled, nor did the Reed-Warblers even raise their heads out of their nest when there was firing. The Icterine's nest, which I discovered after a search, was very beautiful, rather bulky, deep, and rounded on the outside surface, tied, I think, to a lilac bush about 5 ft. from the ground; the eggs were covered with cherry-coloured spots.

SINGING AMONG THE SHELLS.

"About this time I heard that a brood of Nightingales was hatched on the day of the heaviest Hooge bombardment on the lip of the first-line trench. On May 13, at 3 a.m., in the garden of my château I heard a Nightingale begin to sing. Half an hour afterwards German shells were rained upon the garden incessantly throughout the day. The bird sang without a pause where the shells fell thickest until 12 p.m. and survived, for next morning he started again as cheerily as ever. The Marsh-Warbler's strength of song rather disappointed me. The only nest I saw was shown me in meadow-sweet by a marsh ditch, but the birds were common enough wherever the ground suited, and were almost aggressively tame.

THE ORIOLE.

"Late in June I heard that an Oriole's nest had been found in an oak wood. There was an oak wood, too, near my billet, and a fortnight later a friend and I heard a clear whistle which we agreed came from an Oriole, or rather there were four Orioles chasing each other round the tree tops in a state of great excitement, whistling and screeching. Two days after one pair, at any rate, seemed to have settled down to nest. I sat down to watch, and at last saw the hen Oriole hopping cautiously from bough to bough to a little thin oak tree 100 yards from me. She flew to what looked like a small round ball hanging from one of the branches. I could hardly believe I had found the nest so easily, but ten minutes later she returned to the same place, and that time I saw a blade of grass in her mouth, and there was no further doubt. I never saw the bird carry more than one blade of grass at a time in her bill, and however carefully I reached my hiding-place she always approached with extreme caution

and from exactly the opposite direction. The Oriole's whistle has a very human sound, rich and full, but his repertoire is meagre. He starts with a splendid note, which can be heard 400 yards off, but it is all over after half-a-dozen bars. The call-note is loud and screechy; I can take off both it and the whistle passably. Orioles are amusing, active birds, full of life and sound, and the oak woods of Flanders and the Pas de Calais support a fair stock of them.

THE CRESTED LARK.

"One of the commonest birds about the trenches is the Crested Lark, a tame cheeky little creature who sings his pleasant trilly song even in January. Round Vermelles and Loos he seems to be commoner than anywhere else. I like him immensely, but not quite so much as his cousin the Wood-Lark, whom I have not met in Northern France. The two are similar in many respects, especially in their flight; both will sing quietly to themselves on the ground when approached by a human being; both sing in the air at a regular height; both are very fast runners, and given to the most deceitful habits when nesting. On several occasions I was within an ace of finding a Crested Lark's nest, and success only came when I was 'standing to' during the second battle of Ypres. It looked more like that of a Skylark than a Woodlark, and was not so neat or so deep as that little bird makes hers.

"In the winter in the Pas de Calais there have been quite a number of Hen Harriers and Buzzards, and I once saw a Peregrine. Twice in August and once in February I have seen a Great Grey Shrike, in every case at the top of an open down. As for 'Continental' Titmice, Great, Blue, Marsh, and Long-tail Tits are extremely common, and Coal Tits, where there are fir trees, look exactly the same in France as they do in England, they speak exactly the same language, including the same bad language. A naturalist who keeps his eyes and ears open will see on the Western Front practically all the birds he would expect in a southern English county, together with those which I have mentioned, and others which may have escaped me."

OWLS IN THE TRENCHES.

THE following extract from the letter of an officer at the front, communicated to the *Times* by Captain Tailby, is of exceptional interest in connexion with the rat-plague in the trenches :—

“When I was up in the trenches recently I saw numerous Owls; they used to flap about among the trenches at night, quite regardless of shells and snipers, getting a fine harvest of rats and mice, with which the trenches literally swarm. They were the big brown Owls. They always disappeared two hours before dawn; I never could make out where to, but I suppose to woods behind the lines.”

One more proof, adds Captain Tailby, that any game-preservers who allow Owls to be destroyed are simply injuring their own interests, as well as the interests of agriculture.

BIRDS OF GALLIPOLI.

SERGEANT BERNARD W. GILL, R.A.M.C., who writes to the *Observer* (Jan. 2, 1916), from Gallipoli, is one of many nature-students in khaki who find “a habit of observation, acquired and cultivated among peaceful fields and hedgerows, a real blessing in time of war, a true relaxation from wounds and weariness, and the dull monotony of a long-protracted campaign.” He writes :—

“By far the commonest bird out here is a Skylark, larger in size, but with a less varied range of notes than the caroller of English skies. Yet he gives out a sweet, wild warble at dawn, standing on a hillock with crest erect in the jaunty, Lark-like way. One morning a Lark, as I drew near, instead of rising, ran under the lee of a small bush. I had no difficulty in catching the bird, and found a slight wound on the left wing, which made flight impossible. The ground thereabouts is exposed to shrapnel fire, and possibly the wing had been grazed by a bullet. More than once I have seen a

shrapnel-shell burst among a flock of birds, and a casualty now and then seems inevitable. Although unable to fly, the wounded bird was well fed, and lay in my hand unresisting. When I put it down it made off at a great pace towards the cover of some scrub-oak.

“Two days later my duties led me to visit an orderly’s dug-out, and my attention was drawn to a biscuit-tin in a corner; the lid was pierced with holes, and from within came an impatient tapping. My Lark a prisoner! It had taken kindly to Army rations, and fed heartily on biscuit crumbs made moist with water. In a few days the wing was healed, and the bird released.

“With few exceptions the bird life around here is such as you may meet with on any English country-side. Magpies fly from tree to tree in flocks of five or six; Whinchats scold from the tops of juniper-bushes; Pied Wagtails run lightly at the margins of the creeks, and the Redbreast flits across your path as you walk among the low scrub. It seemed like home yesterday, when, just after seeing a Robin, I lighted upon a daisy. It flowered alone, gold-eyed, crimson-tipped, in a little clearing among the alien growths of prickly-leaved dwarfed oak and juniper.

“One bird we often see—a bird that is not to be met with in England. It is long, brown and slender, with the build of a Warbler—much like a Whitethroat, in fact; and when it flies its tail-feathers glow out bright orange. We call them ‘Firetails.’”

The “Firetail” is, of course, the Redstart.

* * *

A subject for home observation is suggested by letters in *Country Life* on the effect of searchlights on Gulls. One correspondent relates that the light has a soporific effect on them. In this case it would seem they rest in the steady beam much as migrating birds rest in the light of the lantern on lighthouse bird-rests. But another writer states that the moving searchlights in the Firth of Forth and in Weymouth Bay rouse the Gulls to active flight and the hunt for food, as though the short hours of winter daylight were insufficient to satisfy their needs and they were glad of the artificial light to enable them to obtain more provender.

The Royal Society for the Protection of Birds.

ANNUAL MEETING.

THE Annual Meeting of the Society was held on March 16th, 1916, at the Middlesex Guildhall. The Report and Statement of Accounts were adopted, on the motion of Mr. Montagu Sharpe, who presided, seconded by Sir John Cockburn; and the Council and Officers were re-elected. The Silver Medal and other awards in the Public School Competition were presented by the Hon. Mrs. Henniker. The following resolution, proposed by Mr. Ogilvie-Grant and seconded by Mr. Walter Goodfellow, was carried unanimously:

"That this Society, mindful of the necessity at the present crisis of restricting imports and of curtailing extravagant expenditure; having regard also to the fact that Importation of the Plumage of Wild Birds for millinery and ornamental purposes has already been condemned by both Houses of Parliament, and that the Government Bill of 1914 failed to pass into law only through the outbreak of war: urgently calls upon the Government to prohibit entirely the Importation of Wild Birds' Plumage—Ostrich-feathers and Eider-down only excepted—as a useless and undesirable import and a wholly indefensible form of extravagance."

A Report of the proceedings will be incorporated, as usual, in the Annual Report, now in the press, and a paper on Birds and Game-Preserves, contributed by "East Sussex," will appear in the Summer Number of BIRD NOTES AND NEWS.

COUNCIL MEETING.

The Council's quarterly meeting was held at the Middlesex Guildhall, Westminster, S.W., on January 28th, Mr. Montagu Sharpe (Chairman) presiding. There were also present: Mr. Bell, Miss

Clifton, Miss Hall, the Hon. Mrs. Henniker, Mr. F. E. Lemon (Hon. Sec.), Mrs. Lemon, Mr. Meade-Waldo, Mr. Ogilvie-Grant, Miss Pollock, and Captain Tailby, and Miss Gardiner (Secretary).

Hon. Secretary's Report.

The Hon. Secretary reported that the Wexford Bird Protection Order, protecting all eggs in the Saltee and Keeragh Islands, had been renewed; that ten lectures had been given since December 15, and that twenty-six Bird and Tree Festivals had been held. The Society's greeting-card, "Into Battle," had had a large sale, and special editions had been supplied with the regimental badges of the 3rd City of London Regiment (Royal Fusiliers) and the Seaforth Highlanders, respectively. A resolution of thanks to Lord Desborough for permitting the use of the words, and to Mr. Murray Dixon for the generous gift of the picture, was agreed to.

Finance and General Purposes Committee.

The statement of accounts for the year 1915 was approved, subject to audit. Mr. Edward J. Bolton, F.R.Met.Soc., of Thornbury Hall, Cheadle, was elected as Hon. Secretary for North Staffordshire, in conjunction with Mr. J. R. B. Masefield. Miss Rhoda Broughton, for many years a Member of the Society, was elected a Fellow; and the following new Members were elected:

Mrs. Bolton (Staffordshire); Miss A. L. Bolton (Edgbaston); Captain A. G. Drummond (Watford); Miss Pauline Hall (Addiscombe); F. J. S. Humphreys (London, W.); Major Jackson (Salisbury); Captain H. H. Smyth, R.N. (Cornwall); the Viscountess de Vesci (London, S.W.); Mrs. Viener (Lancashire).

General Business.

On consideration of the educational work for 1916, it was decided to drop for this year the Public School Essay Competition, since under present circumstances the number of competitors was not likely to be sufficient to give it interest and value; but to maintain the Bird and Tree Competitions in the Elementary Schools without change, on account of the useful results achieved through the co-operation of the Education Authorities and the Teachers. The Annual Report and arrangements for the Annual Meeting were discussed. Correspondence dealing with various matters was considered.

Meetings of the Watchers Committee and of the Finance and General Purposes Committee were held on February 18th.

Next meeting of the Council, April 14th.

OBITUARY.

THE death of Sir Hereward Wake, Bart., has deprived Bird Protection of a constant

and sympathetic supporter. His special interest lay in the economic value of bird-life, and he was always ready to protest against ill-considered denunciation and destruction of a species without proper evidence and trial. Some years ago he wrote for the R.S.P.B. a leaflet addressed to Public Schoolboys, "Fiat Justitia," in which he commended to them the study of ornithology—"you will never be dull or feel bored again as long as you live"—and also pleaded that the case of every bird charged with misdemeanour should be investigated with justice, mercy, and common-sense; since "no person is fitted to pronounce judgment who is not well informed on the subject and has not an impartial mind, and does not take into account the prejudices which exist where real or fancied injury has been suffered."

Sir Hereward had been a Fellow of the Society since 1904.

The Plume Trade.

THE Annual Report (1914-15) of the Governors of the Public Library and Museum of South Australia, Adelaide, records: "At the request of the Sub-Collector of Customs, samples of several shipments of plumes imported for millinery purposes were examined to ascertain if they contained feathers of protected birds, classed as prohibited imports. In one shipment plumes of Egrets were detected and were consequently confiscated by the authorities."

The leader of the American Museum's Congo Expedition, writing an account of the Congo in the *Museum Journal*, pictures a head-dress worn by the "head-wife" of one of the Chiefs, which may suggest novelties for English wearers of "ospreys" and Paradise-plumes. It consists of a skull-cap formed of dogs' teeth, fastened on by a hatpin made of a monkey's forearm-bone; above is a fibre hat, decorated with numerous

tail-feathers of the African grey Parrot, "which bird is often kept in captivity so that the much-prized feathers can be pulled out as fast as they grow." The latter idea may be commended to the notice of the "Committee for the Economic Preservation of Birds," if that egregious body is still in existence, and to the writers on "Egret-farming."

From America come details of a fresh raid by plume-hunters on Laysan Island in the Pacific, one of the largest of the U.S.A. bird-reserves. In 1909 it was ravaged by poachers of the plume-trade, who killed about half the Albatrosses on the island for the sake of their wing-feathers, and left ghastly evidence of their work. On this later occasion it would appear that the breast-feathers only were wanted. Between 150,000 and 200,000 birds were found lying in heaps all over the island; in the majority of cases the feathers had been pulled out, in others knives had

been used and the breast cut away from the birds. The white or Laysan Albatross was the chief sufferer; next the Black-footed Albatross, with the Frigate Bird and the Blue-faced Booby-bird following in order of number killed.

In due course, if import should still be permitted in England, no doubt the feathers pulled by the thieves from these massacred birds, will appear in the London milliners' shops, dubbed, in case of inquiry, "poultry."

Notes.

THE Bird-Protection law of Malta, enacted in 1911, appears still to be inadequate, in that it is directed only towards the preservation of the Warblers and other small land-birds. A member of the R.S.P.B. now stationed in the island, draws the Society's attention to a paper on the Mediterranean Shearwater, or "Great Berta," contributed to the Bulletin of the local Historical and Literary Society by Signor G. Despott, a leading ornithologist of Malta, who avers that this fine species is in imminent danger of extermination.

* * *

The war waged on the Great Berta during recent times, writes Signor Despott, has been relentless, and is carried on simply for the amusement of "sportsmen," who leave the shores at sunset in boats, mostly provided with the required licence, and kill or maim any bird they can hit. The wounded, greater in number than the killed, fall into the sea and are left there to die of their injuries or of starvation—just as in the old days the Gulls of Flamborough were left to perish miserably by the sporting 'Arry on his holiday. The habit of the birds to flock round a wounded comrade affords the shooters opportunity for easy slaughter. The growing scarcity of the bird is attested in a peculiar manner. It was the custom to catch them with nets, remove the under-wing feathers for use in fishing, and then release

them. It does not sound a particularly pleasant experience for the Shearwater. A considerable trade was done in the feathers, quantities of which were exported to the Orient. Ten years ago a single hunter could make £10 or £15 in a season, where now it is impossible to make 10s. Malta is the chief home of the species, and the marked diminution in its numbers is being observed in other Mediterranean countries. Signor Despott adds:

"Last year, while deploring the fact in the presence of two gentlemen whom I thought in a position to prevent this destruction, one of them stated that as the bird was of no practical use there was no reason to protect it; the other added that the matter was too sentimental to be taken into consideration."

* * *

The "sentimentality" of the ornithologist who objects to the extermination of a species, or of the sportsman who objects to senseless butchery, is nothing to that of some other classes of the community who can hardly be regarded as bird-protectors. There is, for instance, the lady who was summoned at Westminster the other day for having left two Linnets and a Goldfinch without food for nearly a week, so that they had starved to death, their breast-bones having cut through their skins; but who avowed that she "loved birds." She represents a large class of birdcatchers and birdkeepers whose love is indicated in somewhat similar fashion.

It has, however, been left for a provincial newspaper to discover that a local taxidermist regards as "pets" the bird-carcases which are sent to him to be stuffed. The particular "pet" in this instance was a Honey Buzzard, taken in a trap on a certain estate, and since presented to the local school, "which has quite a museum for object lessons." If the object lessons consist of the rarest birds of the district taken by the most unsportsmanlike means, the object lesson should not be lost on the County Council and the police.

* * *

An extraordinary immigration of birds of the Thrush family into South Devon is recorded by Mrs. Fuller Maitland, who writes from Sidmouth that in the early mornings of February 24 and 25, huge flocks of birds were seen coming in from the S.E., and presently every lawn and field at the west side of Sidmouth was covered with thousands upon thousands of Fieldfares, Redwings, and Song-Thrushes.

"In the Convent fields there was certainly not a square yard without a bird. I should think in this garden we had six or seven hundred Thrushes and Fieldfares with a few

Redwings. There were many Finches, too, but the Thrush tribe supplied the greater number. All Thursday and Friday there was more or less snow on the ground, which melted when the sun came out. On Saturday snow was over everything again, but when the many thaws came the ground was soft and the poor worms certainly 'rose to the occasion' and seemed to correspond to the number of birds. When the Fieldfares arrived they were a good deal exhausted and sat about looking hunched up and miserable in the snow; when it thawed they went on till long after sunset pecking at the ground and hunting for worms. They also 'made for' the holly-trees and cleared them quickly. I hope there will be no question again as to birds eating holly-berries, for the Fieldfares swallowed every one they could find. I kept the gardener busy sweeping the snow, and gave them an immense quantity of food.

"The poor birds made a good choice in coming here, for so many people fed them, and though there were these vast numbers I heard of comparatively few being seen dead. The Song-Thrushes must have come in thousands from the uplands and the north, but the Fieldfares and Redwings came, I believe, across the sea."

Writing a week later, Mrs. Maitland adds that many Throstles remained, but the Fieldfares and Redwings had gone from the gardens.

Bird-and-Tree (Arbor Day) Festivals.

NOTWITHSTANDING adverse circumstances, a very large number of successful Bird-and-Tree gatherings have been held, only a few of which can be recorded here.

The St. Peter's Girls' School, Bournemouth, celebrated its double success on February 29th. Canon Daldy (Vicar) presided, and a most interesting address was given by Sir Daniel Morris, K.C.M.G., F.L.S., President of the Bournemouth Natural Science Society, who introduced Arbor Day into the West Indies during his sojourn there. He dealt especially with the value of Trees, and Dr.

Penrose, F.Z.S., with Birds. Lady Morris presented the Inter-County and Hampshire Shields and prizes. The excellent musical entertainment which followed was repeated the next night for the R.S.P.B. and local Red Cross funds, when £16 was realised.

Newburgh School, first winners of the Lancashire Shield, marked the day by planting an ash-tree to the singing of the Planting Hymn, and the Shield and prizes were presented by the Vicar (Rev. C. Harris).

For St. John's Girls' School, Keswick, an extra verse to the Planting Hymn was written

by Canon Rawnsley. The Vicar and Curate of St. John's, the Congregational minister, the Vicar of Thornthwaite, Mr. and Mrs. F. E. Marshall, and others took part in the proceedings.

The Frome C.E. Boys received the Somerset Shield at a pleasant gathering on December 22nd; and the Frome Council School Girls, winners of the Second Prize, were entertained to tea by Mrs. Crockford and presented with prizes and medals on December 17th.

Mrs. Cheverton, wife of the Chairman of the Southampton Education Committee, distributed the prizes at the Western District School, Southampton, and planted a mountain ash tree. Mr. Beeston spoke on the delights of nature-study, and the boys sang suitable action and part-songs.

The Foundry Lane Boys, another successful Southampton Team, received their awards from Councillor F. Bath, and Councillor Moulard presented and planted a larch-tree.

At Ridge, Mrs. W. W. Ashley, of Broadlands, presented the awards, which were supplemented by Mrs. Suckling, and Miss Buckell gave a lecture on Birds.

Norfolk's united Festival crowded the Training College, Norwich, with teachers and children from many parts of the county. The Chairman of the County Education Committee presided, Mrs. Russell Colman gave the Shield and prizes, and a delightful address was contributed by the Rev. J. G. Tuck.

Specially good Festivals have also taken place at Princes Risboro' (where the cantata "Vogelwied the Minnesinger" was admirably performed), Cartmel Fell, Privett, Chillington, Bedworth (prizes presented by Mr. W. L. Johnson, M.P.), Morhanger (cantata "Father Time and his Children"), Barton Stacey, Hinton Waldrist, Coleshill, Stratford-on-Avon, Heskin and elsewhere.

IN THE COURTS.

SHOOTING AN OWL.—At *Belper*, on February 17th, Walter Daniels, colliery stoker, was charged with shooting a Barn Owl at Greave's Wood, Heage. He was employed

by a Mr. Glossop, who has the shooting, to look after the wood, and seeing a bird fly out of a tree one moonlight night he shot it, without knowing what it was. It was duly sent to a taxidermist and described in a local paper as a "magnificent silver-hooded owl." A letter was read in court from the R.S.P.B., who had called attention to the case, stating that as defendant was a working man they did not ask for a heavy penalty, but were anxious that the law for the protection of these useful birds should be respected and that men should not be employed as keepers who are ignorant alike of the law and of birds. Defendant was consequently fined only 6s. 6d., but was severely reprimanded by the Chairman.

SHOOTING A CARRIER-PIGEON.—At *Halstead*, on February 22nd, a youth of sixteen was fined 10s. for shooting a carrier-pigeon. The bird was carrying a message on War Office service, so that the offence came under the Defence of the Realm Act. (The *Globe*, commenting on the case, says: "The instinct of brutality which tears the wings from an insect develops into such cruelties as rifling the nests of birds and throwing stones at defenceless animals. It is a vice in itself, and tends to create idle and degenerate slackers instead of stalwart young men who will make keen and eager soldiers when the country has need of them.")

HOOLIGANS AND BIRDS.—At *Romford* a gang of boys, fifteen and seventeen years of age, were charged with breaking into a rhubarb field and damaging fences and plants, and two of them also with Sunday bird-catching and cruelty to decoy-birds. They were in possession of nets, cages, and freshly caught birds. Various small fines were inflicted, the Bench considering the offenders "respectable" lads, and the bird-catching and cruelty "boyish acts."

BIRD NOTES AND NEWS (issued quarterly) will be sent post free to any address for 1s. per annum, payable in advance; single numbers, 3d.

To Members of the Society subscribing 5s. and upwards per annum it is forwarded gratis and post free

Printed by WITHERBY & Co., 326, High Holborn, W.C., and published by the ROYAL SOCIETY FOR THE PROTECTION OF BIRDS, 23, Queen Anne's Gate, S.W.

Bird Notes & News

ISSUED QUARTERLY BY THE ROYAL SOCIETY
:: :: FOR THE PROTECTION OF BIRDS :: ::

Vol. VII.]

SUMMER, 1916.

[No. 2.]

The Bird as a Flying Machine.

THE following extracts are taken from the Essay on "The Flight of Birds," by G. V. Webster, Eton, which was awarded the Silver Medal in the Society's Public School Essay Competition, 1915.

The bird is a perfect flying machine. The shape of the body is calculated to offer little resistance to the air, the curve of the wings from front to back is almost mathematically perfect for giving lifting power. The curve has the further advantage of adapting itself to the pace of the bird, for the faster the bird travels the more the feathers bend, giving the slighter curve which aviators find necessary on high-speed machines. Aviators have also found that an upward incline of their planes is productive of greater stability. Many birds have found this also, for when flying the tips of the primaries bend slightly upwards. This is specially noticeable in the Rook.

Lateral stability is ensured by the flexibility of the flight feathers. Equilibrium is also obtained when necessary by the bird giving more powerful strokes with one wing than with the other. This is very difficult to see; the best instance I know of is that of the Lapwing when disturbed from her nest.

Fore and aft balance is obtained by the tail, or, as in the case of Herons, Waders, etc., which have small tails, by the legs and neck. In Ducks, Guillemots, etc., the webbed feet, which although not long are fairly heavy, and the long neck, are the balancers. It can be noted that all long-legged birds have long necks and short tails. Web-footed birds have short tails, with few exceptions (*e.g.* Terns). Birds with tails that are broad as well as long, such as Hawks and Pigeons, are remarkably clever at manipulating them. They can spread them, raise or lower them, with great rapidity. If a Swallow is watched

on the wing, the use of the tail for raising or lowering the bird and for checking its flight can be clearly seen. If a bird is perched on a bush or wire in a fairly high wind, the tail can be seen constantly at work to help the bird to keep his balance. In the case of long-legged and long-necked birds, a very slight bending or dropping of the legs, or movement of the neck, would be sufficient to correct the balance.

It is interesting to note that short-legged birds, Finches and Crows, usually fold their legs up under them, while long-legged and web-footed birds stretch their legs straight out behind them. Further, the Waders, Ducks, and Flamingoes carry their necks straight out, while the Herons usually carry theirs bent up, except when rising. The Heron's body is very small and light compared with the size of the neck and wings; to hold his neck out would probably upset his balance.

STARTING.

The perching birds when sitting on a bush, take a leap into the air and then spread their wings. They do the same when on the ground. They are gifted with good strong legs which lift their bodies easily into the air. Anyone who has witnessed the attempts of a "winged" Partridge or Pheasant to rise from the ground can gather some idea of the strength of a bird's legs. The Hawks, Owls, Pigeons, game-birds, and Ducks also make use of this "jump start."

The Waders, particularly those which inhabit ditches, such as the Redshank, get under weigh in the same manner. I have noticed another method employed by Waders, especially the shore-frequenting species, and the Gulls. The birds stretch their wings and run along the ground, always facing the wind; in this way they are soon lifted. This form of starting, which I call the "aeroplane start,"

is characteristic of Waders feeding on the mud-flats or sand at low tide, and of Gulls when they are not alarmed or only slightly suspicious. When they are frightened they use the "jump start." The Cormorant when surprised on the flat has to waddle some distance with outstretched wings before he can get under weigh; so does the Puffin. Both these birds can start easily enough from even a low rock.

Birds which rise from the water may be divided into two classes. Some give one hard stroke with their legs, and their wings are free to play. This class is headed by the Gulls, who can rise into the air practically at once. The Terns also rise easily; what they lack in leg power they make up in length of wing. Most Ducks rise fairly easily. The Swans, Guillemots, Grebes, Diving Ducks, and Cormorants leave the water by the "hydroplane" method of starting; on account of their weight they cannot leave the water with a jump, so they stretch their wings and paddle along as hard as they can with their feet until sufficient motion is gained to raise them.

Big birds are all very gradual risers, except the game birds whose wing strokes are very rapid. Some sea-birds, Gulls, Terns, etc., and those that frequent open plains are slow risers, as they would gain no advantage by rising quickly. Birds that build on a cliff, such as the Eagle and various sea-birds, can start easily by dropping on to their wings from the side of the cliff, and such slight loss of altitude as this causes is of no consequence to them.

ALIGHTING.

A small perching bird will fold its wings and incline its body downwards. A Pigeon will either partly flex his wings and volplane, or else slope his wings up and float down on an even keel. Snipe are remarkable for their nearly perpendicular descent with the wings half flexed. Ducks and similar birds keep their wings stretched out and their weight brings them down very rapidly. Birds such as Plover, Rooks, Gulls, Herons, etc., glide down on outstretched wings, either straight or in circles according to circumstances. The Great Northern Diver appears to have great difficulty in alighting. It may sometimes be seen flying round, getting lower and lower, and then rising again as if it did

not dare to make the final dash. Many of the Waders, Gulls and Terns hold the wings stretched above the head for a moment after alighting. Gulls do this on the water. The heavy water-birds approach the water with a volplane, check their speed by slanting up the body, putting the feet well out in front and expanding the webs, skim along the surface for some distance, and sink down gradually as the speed diminishes.

Birds alight in the face of the wind whenever possible.

STYLE OF FLIGHT.

The style of flight employed by different birds varies a great deal. Some species, such as the gallinaceous, are remarkable for their directness of flight. Others, notably the small birds, Jays and Woodpeckers, fly with a peculiar undulating motion, due to a partial or total folding of the wings after a few strokes. The reason for it is economy of energy. It may be taken as a rule that large, heavy-bodied, comparatively short-winged birds which cannot afford to lose altitude once gained, fly in a straight line, while the small birds whose wing-expanse is large compared with their weight, find it easier to employ the undulating or dipping motion.

FLIGHT IN FLOCKS.

The flight of large numbers of birds in flocks is a most beautiful sight; it also presents many points of great interest.

There are two sorts of flocks, perfect flocks, in which every member keeps time with the leader, and imperfect flocks where the discipline is not so good. The small shore birds are the most perfect flock flyers—Dunlin, Ringed Plover, and the like. It is a wonderful sight to see a number of these graceful little birds wheeling and twisting over sand-banks and mud-flats. They keep in perfect time, and every twist and turn is executed with absolute uniformity. Teal do not fall far short of this. Ducks and Geese are good flock-flyers, but not quite so perfect as Teal. These birds usually fly in the form of a wedge.

Starlings sometimes form into flocks of immense numbers and may be seen streaming out over a great length. The flock then follows its leaders, exactly copying every bend and motion as they arrive at the spot where

the leader turned. When in small flocks Starlings usually fly more or less abreast of each other instead of in a line.

A covey of Partridges or a pack of Grouse is a good example of well-disciplined flight. When they have occasion to glide they all cease their wing-beats together and resume them at the same moment. A flock of Rooks, although the birds follow the same lines more or less, does not co-operate in its movements, every individual making independently for the same spot.

The Lapwing as a rule would come under the second heading, but on winter evenings large flocks may be seen in the marshes flying at a great height in a compact and shallow line. Here they keep very well together and present a very pretty effect.

Linnetts, Goldfinches, Chaffinches and the like often congregate in considerable numbers. They have not much flock discipline and they often break into smaller parties. When a flock of birds is disturbed on the ground they do not, as they appear to do, all get up at once, but wait until one of their number takes the lead. In the case of shore birds the leader often runs out a few paces in front of the others and then takes wing. The centre bird of a wedge of Ducks takes the lead, the others taking their time from him.

However great the number may be, birds never fly directly behind one another: this is, I suppose, to avoid the backwash of air, which might overbalance them.

When I was returning from the South of France two years ago we met with large numbers of Gulls while going up the Channel. The wind was blowing nearly north and was consequently almost at right angles to the ship. The ship caused an up-current all along the windward side, and the backwash of air caused another about thirty yards behind. The Gulls following in the hope of scraps were quick to discover and make use of the up-currents. The more wary birds kept behind in the backwash up-current, while the more adventurous, chiefly Common Gulls and Kittiwakes, flew over the stern, keeping on the windward side to make use of the up-current. In this current they floated over the ship, and for several minutes kept such exact pace that they appeared to be motionless. Occasionally they would correct their balance

with slight motions of the wings while the tails could be seen constantly at work.

They all had their bodies inclined slightly towards the wind to prevent loss of position by lee-way. One occasionally did get blown out of his place, and it was interesting to note that immediately he got to the leeward side of the ship he was forced to flap his wings.

This method of flying behind a ship, although an everyday occurrence, is a really wonderful sight, and is not easily forgotten when once seen.

Space permits of but a brief quotation from the Second Prize Essay, by A. F. Bell (Berkhamsted)—a piece of good field observation.

There are few things more beautiful than a bird on the wing. I have watched a pair of Kestrels poising over a Welsh hill, moving vertically up and down with wings just vibrating, and then sweeping away on moveless wings and back again to their hovering place, till of a sudden one of them would close its wings and drop like a log out of sight to rise again a moment later, leaving one less field-mouse on the earth; and I have watched the whirlwind flash of a Sparrowhawk in the wake of a frightened Blackbird, but neither of them compare with the grand wheeling, soaring flight of a pair of Buzzard Hawks patrolling a valley in Cornwall. Often have I watched them sweep across the valley and then, displaying the whole expanse of their great wings, turn round again and swing across the valley, uttering wild harsh screams all the time. Then, for a change, they would soar in a great spiral up and up until their screams were lost in the skies. Once while watching one of these birds reaching his topmost spiral, I noticed a Pigeon flying with his quick straightforward flight over the wooded hill; in a moment, like an arrow from the blue, the Buzzard shot downward at his prey; the Pigeon saw him almost too late, and turning, hurled himself downward for the top of the wood quite close to me. He was almost too late, for I saw the Hawk's legs shoot out from under him for the strike, but at that moment the Pigeon was through the green top of the low wood, and the Hawk, spreading his wings once more, flew angrily away.

[This Hawk was probably a Peregrine Falcon, not a Buzzard.—ED.]

Economic Ornithology.

FOOD OF THE ROOK, STARLING AND CHAFFINCH.

IN 1908, it may be remembered, the British Association appointed a committee to investigate the question of the food of birds, with a view to ascertaining which are injurious and which beneficial from the agriculturist's point of view. The birds selected were the Rook, Starling and Chaffinch as debatable species, and the work was carried out in conjunction with the Board of Agriculture, who have now published the Report on the subject. The work of examination was first entrusted to Dr. Gordon Hewitt, and after his appointment as Entomologist to the Government of Canada, to Mr. H. S. Leigh, M.Sc., of Manchester University, and Mr. F. V. Theobald, F.E.S., of the South-Eastern Agricultural College at Wye, assisted by Mr. W. McGowan. The majority of birds reported on by Mr. Leigh came from the northern counties of England and from Wales, and Mr. Theobald's from the southern counties. It is interesting to note, says the preface to the Report, "that the facts ascertained from the two investigations are in most respects very similar, but that in the case of one bird the conclusions drawn are very different."

As Mr. Theobald observes, an investigation can only show part of what birds eat, for some things cannot be identified satisfactorily, while the absence of records of the food of nestlings is unfortunate, as this is a most important point in deciding whether a bird is harmful or beneficial. (Practically all nestlings are fed on animal food, and as the bird population is infinitely greater at the time the young are in the nest than at

any other period, [they must account for the destruction of immense quantities of insects.]

THE ROOK.—The *Manchester* investigation dealt with 332 Rooks from 63 localities, and "has shown that the percentage of animal matter taken from April to September is large, and also that it is made up mainly of injurious insects. On the other hand, we have to record a large quantity of grain in the Rook's diet; for nine months, from September to May inclusive, the percentage of grain is very high, and only falls to a really low level in June, July and August." It is emphasized, however, that the harm done is not in proportion to the amount of grain eaten, since in September and October it was frequently observed that the birds were merely taking up grain dropped during harvesting operations. The insects were mostly wireworms and leatherjackets, one gizzard containing as many as 95 whole leatherjacket larvæ, and another 103 wireworms. Acorns, potato, and a few weed-seeds occurred.

The *Wye* investigators examined 277 Rooks from 53 localities, and come to the conclusion that the bird is much more harmful than beneficial, so far as the adult birds are concerned. From February to April and October to December the food chiefly consisted of grain, which they appeared to take, largely at all times except in May and July; but there are no records for August and September. Nevertheless, it destroyed a considerable number of harmful insects (chiefly wireworms and leatherjackets) and a few mollusca. A few strange articles were found, including a bootlace, pieces of string and cloth, and even a nail.

THE STARLING.—The *Manchester* investigation dealt with 486 birds. Injurious insects occurred in 365 cases, largely weevils and leatherjackets; one crop contained 197 leatherjackets, and at least four more than 150 each; "it is plain therefore that these birds were rendering valuable service to the farmer." The percentage of animal food, almost entirely insects, was very large.

Grain was also taken, "but not in proportion to the insects, and as with the Rook the damage done in this respect was not necessarily as great as the quantity of grain would suggest." "The Starling, if not too abundant, must certainly be regarded as a friend of the agriculturist." Weed-seeds, elderberries, and grass were among the other matter.

The *Wye* investigators received 748 birds from 76 districts, and conclude that Starlings are "most beneficial on account of the great number of destructive insects and snails that they devour." The main food was found to consist of injurious insects, chiefly leather-jackets and weevils, except in November and, in one year, in December. The snails included numbers of the strawberry-snail, which is especially destructive to strawberries, violets and iris. The grain taken was "in such small quantities as almost to be negligible."

THE CHAFFINCH. — At *Manchester* 357 birds were examined. Weed-seeds were in the greatest abundance, many instances showing that "the bird takes large quantities of the most troublesome weed-seeds, such as chickweed, dock, and knotgrass. The grain appeared to be taken chiefly from manure or ricks and not from the cultivated land, so that the bird was doing little or no damage to the farmer," and the proportion of other seeds of value found (in only 3 per cent. of the birds) was "surprisingly small in view of the general impression as to the destructive habits of the Chaffinch."

The *Wye* examiners received 527 birds from 80 localities, but the record is noted as necessarily incomplete, because so little food was found in them; this is probably accounted for by the greater part of their insect diet being of so frail a nature as to be soon destroyed, and as an illustration it is mentioned that some Chaffinches were watched clearing broad beans of aphids, but when shot and next day examined scarcely any remains of the fly were identifiable. The bird seemed to be mainly insectivorous in the summer months, probably eating great quantities of aphids. Corn seems to be taken all the year round; "it is probably obtained largely from poultry food in farmyards as well as from the stubble, the stackyard and standing corn." From the food contents found, the

Chaffinch "appeared to be economically neutral"; "the question largely depends upon how many of the weed-seeds they have eaten germinate after expulsion."

THE FARMER AND THE ROOK.

An illustration of the differences of opinion existing with regard to the Rook is furnished by contrasting the official Report with the testimony of a Bucks farmer, Mr. C. T. Adams, who writes to the *Bucks Herald*, of the damage done by Sparrow, Starling, and Woodpigeon, and adds:—

"Lastly I will deal with that much-maligned and much-persecuted, beautiful and most useful bird, the Rook. I say nothing of the interesting and beautiful picture in every landscape a rookery is. I will tell of the usefulness of the birds, who all the year round search for grubs, slugs, wireworm, etc., which would destroy all the crops were it not for their constant attention. When I came to Wendover several of my fields were infested with wireworm. I allowed no one to disturb the Rooks when following the ploughs; and there were then very many more Rooks in this neighbourhood than there are to-day. Likewise when we have drilled a field of corn, we keep them off until the land is properly harrowed, and then allow the Rooks to do just as they like. They search all over the soil for insects that the drill and harrows have brought to the surface, and when they have done this they leave the field. If the corn has been put in in good tilth so that seed is properly covered, I have never known a plant destroyed. There are times when corn is planted very early or very late, and bird-food is very scarce; they do require some attention then. . . . The late Mr. R. Keen, to prove my theory, shot a Rook coming from my fields some years ago, and on opening the bird's crop found no less than 90 wireworms. This fact made a convert of him.

"Were it not for the presence of millions of Starlings, which eat the Rooks' food, I do not think the damage by Rooks to crops, even if not looked after at all, would be worth mentioning. In any case, let poisoning be the very last resource to destroy any bird."

Birds in the War Area.

BIRD notes from the Expeditionary Force continue to appear in the papers, both London and provincial. From British Headquarters in France a correspondent writes to the *Times* (May 10th) of the bird-life in the grounds of a deserted French château—spinneys filled with warblers, and almost every thicket holding its Nightingale or Blackcap, Blackbirds, Thrushes, Wrens and Robins even more plentiful than in an English park, despite an Irish abundance of Magpies and Jays enough to break a gamekeeper's heart.

"But the chief discovery has been the quaintest Treecreeper's nest, close by the house, built not in a hole in the tree, but slung, more like the nest of some sort of warbler, among the leaves where two branches of the tree are webbed together with ivy. . . . Starlings and sparrows of course there are here, for Starlings and sparrows are the two creatures which conspicuously profit by the war. Every house that is blown to bits by shell-fire provides an endless choice of fascinating nesting-places for sparrows among the chinks of the ruined walls; and never did Starlings have such opportunity for unmolested housekeeping as in the remains of these poor battered churches. As for the guns, they are to the birds, presumably, no more than thunder, and when a shell falls near it is only some new, if startling, natural phenomenon."

A later contribution (June 7th) on "Birds of a French Wood" says:—

"No wood ever held more of the larger perching birds, Carrion Crows, Magpies and Jackdaws and Jays, Woodpigeon and Stock-dove and Turtle-dove, Green Woodpecker and Hawk and Golden Oriole. Besides the Kestrel and Sparrowhawk, there is some other Hawk nesting there, a large bird, slate grey, which slips away keen-winged through the wood and later swings round and round in endless circles, like a Kite or Buzzard, for

hours together, high up in the sky. No one here knows the splendid bird's name. . . . The true lords of the wood are the Carrion Crows, thick as Rooks in a rookery and as talkative. Ordinarily one is likely to hear no other note of a Crow, whether Carrion or Hoodie, than the single raucous caw or the triumphant *rahh-rahh-rahh-rahh*, from which the Scandinavian peoples have borrowed the finest battle-cry in the world. But here, where the Crows are at home, one learns their amazing conversational facility; their profuse vocabulary of clucks and groans and twangings like the breaking of violin strings. . .

"The Orioles are of course the chief joy of the wood. They are always in the same small section. One has only to go there and stand still for a while, and sooner or later the beautiful flute-like liquid call comes ringing from somewhere out of the green world above. Then a brilliant meteor of yellow and black flashes through a gap between the tree-tops, and the liquid whistle which sounded on the left hand is now on the right. Then it is behind one, then in front; and from somewhere inside the circle of sound one hears the harsh wheezing answer of the hen bird. The note of the hen Oriole is as ill-matched to her lord's as is the croak of the hen Nightingale."

* * *

To the Nightingale there is a fine allusion in the late Mr. A. D Gillespie's published letters from Flanders:—

"Presently a misty moon came up, and a Nightingale began to sing . . . and it was strange to stand there and listen, for the song seemed to come all the more sweetly and clearly in the quiet intervals between the bursts of firing. There was something infinitely sweet and sad about it, as if the countryside were singing gently to itself, in the midst of all our noise and confusion and muddy work; so that you felt the Nightingale's song was the only real thing which would remain when all the rest was long past and forgotten. It is such an old song too, handed on from Nightingale to

Nightingale through the summer nights of so many innumerable years."

* * *

Dr. Eastwick Field kindly sends for publication in *Bird Notes and News* the following notes on birds from Mr. W. Waldegrave Little, of the R.A.M.C., serving in Northern France.

"It was kind of you to think of sending me *Bird Notes*, which I read with much interest. There was an article in the *Times* recently on 'Birds at the Front,' from the same contributor I think. He discusses the reasons why the birds take so little notice of gun fire and bursting of shells, saying they seem to treat it like thunder, as a loud noise which does them no harm. It must be so.

"Last spring it was discussed in the *Times* whether the demon of war would drive the birds away, and I agreed with the writer that it would not. It was interesting that I heard the first Nightingale while in my bed on the tailboard of a motor-lorry, in a corn-field, while I lay listening to monster shells bursting in a town eight miles back from the firing-line. This year it was in a roofless village and close to a noisy field-gun that I heard the first Nightingale; but they are nothing like as common in this part of France as they were in Belgium last year.

"I have moved about in this part a good deal this year. Much of it is very charming, with plenty of woodland, but there are not as many birds as there would be in a similar part of England. Unfortunately there are many of the warblers whose notes I do not know, but I have heard at the same time Blackcap, Chiffchaff, Nightingale, and what I think must have been the Grasshopper Warbler (a long drawn-out note just like a grasshopper). Chiffchaffs, Garden Warblers and Blackcaps are very plentiful, but I have never heard a Willow-Wren. Whitethroats I cannot identify by their song, but I have looked for their nests in likely places and never found them. I have never seen a Peewit since I landed. Jays we have, and Green Woodpeckers, and Magpies any number, Jackdaws, Crows and Rooks and a great number of Chaffinches which seem to have a better song than in England.

"Three birds still baffle me. One that hides in the fields and says 'Wit-wit-it'; one that pipes in the trees with fluty notes like a Blackbird just beginning, and says 'Oriol-ole' nothing more. I think I saw it once, about the size of a Cuckoo. The other is the one that calls at night like a big frog.

"Butterflies are not as plentiful as they would be if this were England. . . . But, of course, all the country that I have seen is very tame compared with what I hope we shall see before long. I could place nearly all of it in the southern counties of England. For instance, you may get a bank of chalk rising out of the clayey soil, and immediately you have the little junipers and orchis and all the other things, gorse, broom, etc., that grow on the chalky slopes round Warlingham. The same bird's nest; Yellowhammer and Tree Pipit I met with too.

"I get plenty of opportunities of seeing the country, having continually to walk from one village to another, and my nature studies are a great relaxation from a life that would otherwise be very monotonous. I cannot say I like this perpetual hedgeless landscape, with all the villages completely hidden by trees."

* * *

An artillery officer, whose letter is quoted in the *Spectator*, writes:

"The Starlings out here have acquired the trick of giving three shrill taxi whistles, in imitation of the call for enemy aeroplanes. It is great fun to see everyone diving for cover; I was nearly taken in myself the other day."

* * *

With regard to the little warbler noted by a soldier-ornithologist in Gallipoli, to which the name of "Firetail" had been given, and which was identified by correspondents of the *Observer* with the Redstart, Mr. Ogilvie-Grant writes: "The Gallipoli 'Firetail' probably, almost certainly, refers to the Grey-backed Warbler (*Agrobates familiaris*), the Eastern form of the Rufous Warbler (*A. galactodes*)."

The Royal Society for the Protection of Birds.

COUNCIL MEETING.

THE Quarterly Meeting of the Council was held on April 14th, 1916, at the Middlesex Guildhall, S.W., Mr. Montagu Sharpe, Chairman, presiding. There were also present: Mr. Bell, Hon. Mrs. Drewitt, Miss Hall, Mr. F. E. Lemon (Hon. Sec.), Mrs. Lemon, Mr. Meade-Waldo, Mr. Ogilvie-Grant, Miss Pollock, and Captain Tailby, and the Secretary (Miss Gardiner).

Hon. Secretary's Report.

The Hon. Secretary reported that twelve lectures had been given since March 16th, and eighteen Bird-and-Tree Festivals held. Bird Protection Orders had been issued for Yorkshire (East Riding) and for the County of Mayo, both being renewals of the previous Orders. In consequence of the insufficient publication of Bird Protection Orders in certain counties, on the ground of war-economy, the police of those counties had been asked to make as full use as possible of the Society's close-time posters, and a very large number of these had been printed and issued. The local Hon. Secretaries of the Society had also been asked to mitigate as far as possible the effects of official frugality by letting the public know, through placards and posters, the existence of a law for the protection of birds and a Society to support it.

Finance and General Purposes Committee.

The accounts for the quarter were presented. The appointment of the Rev. A. Linzee Giles, Vicar of Great Malvern, as Hon. Secretary for South Worcestershire

was confirmed; and the following Fellows and Members were elected:—

FELLOWS: Mrs. Arthur Allen (Ilminster); Cecil C. Baring (Sudbury); Miss C. D. Richards (Perthshire).

MEMBERS: Miss Ballard (Malvern); Mrs. Burrows (Tunbridge Wells); Harold Coventry (New Brighton); A. W. Craig (Battles Bridge); Miss Du Faur (London, W.); Mrs. A. F. Ericson (Newcastle-on-Tyne); Mrs. C. M. Hudson (Bradway); Miss Kemplay (London, W.); Miss E. Marston (London, N.); Mrs. Hollingsworth Thomson (Switzerland).

LIFE MEMBER: Miss Isa Postgate (Stamford Bridge).

Watchers Committee.

The appointments of Watchers for 1916 were confirmed and the reports received as to their work in various districts; and the preservation of rare birds in several districts was specially considered.

General Business.

The Standing Committees were re-elected. It was reported that copies of the Resolution as to the Importation of Plumage, passed at the Annual Meeting, had been forwarded to members of the Government and others whose help might be looked for. The action taken by the Society with reference to the exposure of song-birds for sale as food during the close season, was detailed, and correspondence with the firm chiefly concerned, and with Mr. Dickinson, M.P., was read. It was agreed to take further steps if necessary. Attention was drawn to an advertisement of an air-gun, with picture of two owls killed by the weapon; and in addition to a protest against this particular case, it was agreed that action should be taken to deal with the air-gun nuisance.

Next Meeting of the Council, July 21st.

OBITUARY.

THE death of the Ven. Basil Wilberforce, D.D., Archdeacon of Westminster, which occurred on May 13th, must have been felt as a personal loss by thousands who had known him only as preacher or speaker; and millions of the animal creation, did they but comprehend their loss, would mourn as deeply. A passionate advocate of justice and humanity to all "the lesser brethren," Archdeacon Wilberforce was keenly alive to the persecution of birds by man, whether as plume-hunter or bird-catcher, and in his eloquent appeals from the R.S.P.B. platform denounced with equal vigour "the absolutely cruel and senseless habit of decorating hats and bonnets with the bodies of birds and with aigrettes of herons' feathers," and the keeping of winged things in cages—"the sight of a lark in a cage in a London slum seems to me about the saddest sight imaginable; is there anything more pathetic than these little spirits in prison?" To his poetical mind the birds were "the angels of the animal world," "the wonderful feathered thoughts of God."

Archdeacon Wilberforce was a hearty supporter of the Society and its work, and had been a Fellow since 1904.

Commander Harry Pennell, R.N., who went down in the *Queen Mary*, in the Naval Battle, was a keen bird-student and a supporter of the Society, taking special interest in the work of the Watchers Committee. He had gained distinction by his services in the Antarctic Expedition of 1910-13.

Among other recent losses to the Society must be mentioned Mr. Cornelius Hanbury, Fellow, and Dr. Stamford Felce and Mr. J. W. McLellan, Members of the Society. Mr. McLellan also generously assisted the Society

by placing his skill as a photographer at its service and presenting a number of lantern slides to its collection.

Mr. Ernest Purnell Jones, winner a few years ago of the Society's Silver Medal for the most useful essay on "How to protect Crops without destruction of Bird Life" (published in the Society's pamphlet, "Farm, Garden and Birds"), died at Crewe on May 6th, aged 35, after a very long illness. A practical ornithologist and horticulturist, he spoke and wrote on birds with knowledge and sympathy, and to the last never lost his deep interest in them.

Bird-and-Tree work loses grievously by the death, on May 28th, of Mr. Herbert Studman, aged fifty-two, for twenty-five years headmaster of Woburn Boys' School. Mr. Studman took up the Competition with characteristic enthusiasm, and his keen interest in the work of the boys was only equalled by his pleasure and pride in their rapid progress and in the premier position to which they attained as winners of the Bedfordshire and Inter-County Shields. "Nature-lovers such as our late school-master are few and far between," writes the Duchess of Bedford, who did so much to encourage his work. "It was strange that just as the coffin was being lowered a thrush sang loudly from the top of one of the churchyard trees. I think everyone noticed it. I never knew any master whose boys were so devoted to him, and he will be sadly missed." Among the many wreaths was one, "In loving memory of a really kind and thoughtful counsellor, guide and friend, from all his old scholars who were members of the Bird Team," and another one from Her Grace, "A last token of regard from one Nature-lover to another."

SONG-BIRDS AS FOOD.

TOWARDS the end of March the attention of the Society was called to the display in a large West-end provision store of Song- and Missel-Thrushes, Blackbirds, Redwings and Larks; and on March 31st a letter from the Countess of Mayo appeared in the *Times*, invoking the aid of the Press and public "to nip in the bud a hideous innovation which has come to my personal notice" in the offer of these birds in numbers for sale.

"The wholesale murder of our native song-birds is something quite new to London, and unless summary measures are taken to stamp it out at once, Great Britain will soon be bereft not only of a charm which no Continental nation can boast, but deprived of our most valuable allies in the unceasing war against mankind's greatest enemies—the insects. There is not even the sordid excuse of 'food in war-time,' because the class of customer who deal at the stores in question can by no stretch of fancy be termed poor. Full particulars have been supplied to the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds, as it seems probable that the additional offence has been perpetrated of killing these song-birds since the beginning of the close season; but I feel convinced that the innate common sense and kindness of the nation will be the best remedy."

In a further letter on the subject on April 1st, Mr. Montagu Sharpe was able to state, with regard to the particular case reported by Lady Mayo, that the firm had given an assurance that there should be no repetition of the offence of offering wild birds for sale during the close-time.

"The larger question of the killing and eating of song-birds is one for the public rather than the trade to deal with; for it has to be remembered that for a great part of the year our wild birds are at the mercy of catcher and dealer. The practice seems to be on the increase. Forty years ago the eating of Sky-larks was a novelty at fashionable functions. The late Lord Wolseley was one of the first to protest in public against 'a

barbarous piece of luxury' which he hoped would never take root in this country. These birds are caught by the thousand for dispatch to Leadenhall Market in the open season, and appear in strings in the poulterers' shops. The introduction of Song- and Mistle-thrushes, Redwings and Blackbirds into West-end stores is new. For many years it has been the custom for English people to hold up their hands in holy horror at the slaughter of small birds which has produced the songless fields and blighted crops of Italy and Southern France. In Italy they are eaten by the poorest folk. In England the offenders are of the well-fed classes, who desire some novel tit-bit or gastronomic flavour to titillate into existence an imaginary appetite. Lady Mayo does well to call for protest against the "hideous innovation," from all Englishmen and Englishwomen who still have any soul for music or any love for nature, who have ears with which to hear the bird-song that makes England pre-eminent among the nations, or who would wish to claim, without a blush, that they are of the same race with Shakespeare and Shelley and Keats, with Wordsworth and Matthew Arnold."

In the House of Commons, on April 19th, Mr. Dickinson asked the Home Secretary whether his attention had been called to the fact that British song-birds were being killed and sold for food in West-end shops, and whether he would take measures to enforce the observance of the law and prevent this destruction of bird-life?

The Home Secretary, in reply, stated that inquiries had been made by the Metropolitan Police and they found no reason to think that, except in rare cases, song-birds were being used for food in contravention of the law. The Royal Society for the Protection of Birds were watchful to prevent such contraventions, but had not found evidence of more than one or two recent cases. Suitable action had been taken with regard to them. "I sincerely trust," added Mr. Samuel, "that the barbarous practice of killing song-birds for food will not take root in this country. The police have been, and are, very ready to take action whenever there is reason to think that illegalities have been committed."

The Plume Trade.

At the Annual Meeting of the R.S.P.B. it was mentioned that an advertisement had appeared in a London paper, from a plume-hunter or dealer in Celebes, offering Birds-of-Paradise of all qualities and prices. The attention of the Dutch Committee for Prohibition of the Exportation of Birds and Bird-skins from the Dutch Colonies (formed by the Royal Zoological Society of Amsterdam, "*Natura Artis Magistra*") was also called to this, in the hope that they might be able to deal with the matter. In reply the Society writes to the R.S.P.B., through its President and Secretary, detailing the measures for checking the traffic in New Guinea, and adding:—

"In our correspondence with Dr. J. C. Koningsberger, Director of 's Lands Plantentuin at Buitenzorg, Java, and Adviser of the Government in these affairs, this gentleman has more than once laid stress on his opinion that a prohibition of the importation of birds and bird-skins into Europe would be the best way to put an end to bird-hunting.

"We are of opinion that for the present your country has it in its power completely to stop the trade in bird-skins. It would be quite in the line of the politics of economy adopted by the Allies to forbid all shipments of birds and bird-skins to their ports. If no market for the articles can be found either in England, France, Italy, or Russia, the plume-trade would be dead, as Germany cannot get any birds or bird-skins, and as America will not have them.

"If you could get your Government to take the desired steps, the war would at least have one good result—the abolition of the trade in bird-skins for millinery purposes."

The Trustees of the British Museum have agreed to support the resolution passed at the Annual Meeting of the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds, urging His Majesty's Government to prohibit the

importation of Wild Birds' Plumage—Ostrich-feathers and Eider-down only excepted, and have addressed a letter accordingly to the President of the Board of Trade.

The *New York Sun* (May 26, 1916) reports that large quantities of Egret plumes, quills, wings, heads, and skins or parts of skins of wild birds from all parts of the world, consigned to forty millinery and feather houses in New York, have been seized by the Customs authorities.

"Suspicion was directed to several large firms several months ago. Every case of plumage which has been entered at this port within the last six months has been taken directly to the Appraiser's Stores, and there subjected to close scrutiny at the hands of the customs examiners. One after another of the cases was found to contain large percentages of plumage from wild birds. The prohibited feathers were in every instance mixed with the plumage of domestic fowls, against which there is no ban. The aigrettes, &c., were carefully arranged on the bottom of the cases and the domestic plumage placed on top."

The National Association of Audubon Societies have obtained thirty prosecutions lately for infringements of the law, and many more cases are pending. Over \$8000 have been paid in fines.

PLUME-TRADE EXHIBITS AT A NATIONAL MUSEUM.

Mr. C. C. Baring, a Fellow of the Society, writes to the Editor of *Bird Notes and News*:

"One day, not very long ago, I paid a visit to the Bethnal Green Museum, and while looking at the many interesting exhibits I came to some cases illustrative of the economic use of wild birds' plumage. At first I thought there must be some enlightened and far-seeing person who had realized the coming of a time when the public will awake to the knowledge that

it is a crime to slaughter birds for mere adornment, and who had accordingly presented these cases to show a future generation how barbarous was that which preceded it. My heart warmed to this wonderful person, and I looked forward to meeting him perhaps at the Society's annual meeting, since he must certainly be a member.

Imagine my horror when I discovered that those cases were there for an altogether different purpose—not to record the fall of one of the vilest trades in existence, but to encourage it. My enlightened humanitarian was an altogether fictitious character.

"There was a case of miserably stuffed Humming-birds, apparently murdered for the purpose of showing visitors that there is money to be made out of their feathers. There were skins of King Penguins, seemingly there to illustrate a notice to the effect that the skins of these birds are valuable as a good base for muffs and furs: an invitation to the unscrupulous hunter to make an expedition to the Falkland Islands and do his best to exterminate these unoffending birds.

"Is it right that a national museum, of all places, should be used for such a purpose?"

ILLEGAL TRADING IN INDIA.

The Society is indebted to Mr. W. Jesse, Hon. Sec. of the Indian Branch, for the following extract from the *Civil and Military Gazette* (Lahore), May, 1916. It appears under the heading "Scotching a Barbarous Trade."

"A few figures are published showing that the Customs Preventive Department on the Bombay side have during the past year been highly successful in stopping the trade in the illicit export of bird plumage. Ten exporters have come within their grasp and from these were seized egret plumes worth Rs. 2,19,047 in India and £44,000 in London. The rupee value represents the sum which the exporters paid to those who took the feathers from the birds, so the loss to the trade was considerable. In addition, penalties varying from Rs. 10,000 each, and amounting altogether to Rs. 59,175, were inflicted on these men, and over Rs. 52,000 of this sum has been recovered. The Preventive Department believe that they destroyed about 90 per cent. of the trade last year. But the profits are very large, and the despatch of parcels is beginning again."

Notes.

THE Church Army and the Y.M.C.A., whose Huts are doing such admirable and invaluable work for our soldiers both abroad and at home, are also giving most useful help to the cause of the birds, by accepting the Society's Bird-Protection placards for posting in military camps in Great Britain, and *Bird Notes and News* and other R.S.P.B. publications for literature tables.

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Apropos of the Silver Medal paper on "Flight," printed in the present number of this magazine, is an article on "The Beginnings of Flight," in the January number of the *American Museum Journal*. This deals with Mr. C. W. Beebe's theory that a line of feathers recently discovered to exist on the

hind limbs of young birds may be the remains of pelvic or hind-wings which millions of years ago perhaps assisted to launch the first birds into the air. In this view, the primal birds did not begin to fly by running and then jumping into the air (on what may be called the aeroplane method) until the forelimbs developed into wings to assist the process: but by leaping from trees (by the parachute method) and spreading the limbs, until both fore- and hind-wings came to be. Mr. Beebe's theory is that flight at that time was merely gliding, both sets of wings being rigidly extended, and merely enabling their possessor to volplane like a flying squirrel.

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The *Estates Gazette* and the *Field* have given considerable attention of late to records

of daylight-hunting by the Barn-Owl. Neither the war nor the Daylight Act can be credited with having upset the Owl's hours. The reports come from various parts of the country, and the only reason that appears to be furnished is that the mild wet winter have produced unusual numbers of voles and field-mice. The Little Owl and Short-eared Owl hunt by day, and even the Brown Owl has been observed by a member of the R.S.P.B. Council coming out by daylight in her garden. The *Estates Gazette* welcomes the change, as affording better opportunity for watching and appreciating the Barn-Owl's feeding habits: "on a very moderate estimate every Barn-Owl should be worth in ordinary times at least £5 a year to the farmer, and with corn at its present price any increase in the number of rats, mice and voles becomes a very serious matter."

* * *

Six or seven years ago Mr. A. G. Spence read a paper before the East Lothian Farmers' Club, in which he alluded to the increase of rats, and attributed it mainly to the killing of Owls and Kestrels. Since that time the Club and the County Council have been working together to try to reduce the plague and they have recorded their experiences. They have had rat-catchers busy, have used steel traps, ferrets, dogs, netting, flashlights (with terriers), flooding, poison and virus. The virus was found least desirable, and the poison dangerous—the rats haunting water afterwards and falling into the wells. But nothing is said of any efforts made for the better protection and encouragement of Owls and Kestrels. It is merely mentioned that Owls and cats "play a prominent part."

* * *

It appears time that a strong line should be taken by bird-lovers regarding the use of

poisonous worm- and weed-killers in the garden. Birds eating the poisoned worms, or imbibing moisture from the weeds, take in the arsenical mixture and die a miserable death, Thrushes and Blackbirds, as the chief worm-destroyers, suffering most. Non-poisonous compounds should be insisted on if the gardener will not take the trouble to root up the weeds. As for the worms, everyone in these post-Darwin days knows the necessity for them in ventilating and enriching the soil, and may trust to the beaks of birds to remove the surplus without disfiguring the lawn.

* * *

It is not an unknown thing for a bumble-bee to take possession of a nesting-box intended for its betters; but an Edgbaston correspondent sends a curious instance of a Blue Tit apparently setting up house in a box already occupied by a bee. The Tits built in the box, but after the full complement of eggs was laid the pair forsook it and built a second nest in a second box. The owner of the garden, curious to know the reason for this strange move, had the box examined, when beneath nest and eggs were found a bee and a piece of comb, about an inch and a half square, the cells full of eggs.

* * *

A plague of caterpillars has riddled the oak-leaves this spring, but the *Times* (June 6) says that thousands of Starlings and Jackdaws have cleared the trees in Ashted Wood from the pest. Visitors to Richmond Park and other wooded areas have noted the crowds of Starlings, Blackbirds, Thrushes, Wagtails, and Sparrows, busily carrying off beaksful to their nestlings from under the infected trees every few minutes, while the Warblers were equally busy among the branches.

“In a Cheshire Garden.”

THE Rev. G. Egerton-Warburton, author of “In a Cheshire Garden” sends the following further notes to *Bird Notes and News* :—

“There is in our garden, close to the carriage-drive, a plantation of tall hollies, chestnuts, and rhododendrons to which every evening during August and September, 1914, great numbers of Starlings came to roost. The different flocks, some containing more than a hundred birds, used to arrive from every direction, and at first alighted on the taller trees in the garden, but all in the end settled down to roost in this one plantation. They kept arriving at intervals from half past six until it was nearly dark, in September they began to come at half-past five, and by the time they were all here it would, I think, be no exaggeration to say that there were thousands of birds in this one small clump of trees and shrubs.

“For about an hour or so before composing themselves to sleep they would chatter together, and the noise they made was quite extraordinary and could be heard a long way off.

“This nightly concourse of Starlings went on until September 22nd, when the numbers and the noise seemed greater than ever, but the curious thing is that the next night, September 23rd, as far as I could tell, not one single Starling was there, not one out of all the hundreds or thousands that had come to roost in this plantation every evening for two months, and none ever came again to my knowledge for the rest of the year!

“One evening in July, 1915, a small flock of about thirty came, but only that once as far as I know; I never saw any come again.

* * * *

“In May and June, 1915, it was quite a common thing to hear the drumming of a Snipe as we sat in the garden and to see him flying round and round at a great height, and this at almost any time of the day; sometimes even when it was getting dark we could hear the sound. One day towards the

end of June I caught sight of a Snipe on the open ground in the old river-bed where the grass had been eaten down by cattle, and I watched it for a good while through a glass. It was sitting close on the ground with its back to me, and I could see plainly the markings of every feather. Whilst I was looking it never moved, and after I had gone away for a few minutes and had come back again it was still there but in an altered position, still sitting close to the ground but showing a side view, and through the glass its large black eye appeared to be watching me. I left once more for a short time, and when I looked again it was still there, but standing up, and as long as I watched it never stirred, but all the while another Snipe that I could not see, its mate I suppose, kept repeating its ‘chuck, chuck’ kind of note. There was no trace of a nest where the Snipe had been, nor did I ever notice a Snipe again in the same place. No doubt there must have been a nest somewhere about, probably in the rougher, wetter part of the river-bed. The drumming and flight were continued every day for a week or so longer.

* * * *

“On the 10th of June last year (1915) I was on the high road between Colwyn Bay and Llandulas, when in a belt of trees only separated from the path by a stone wall, I saw the interesting sight of a pair of Tree-Creepers feeding two young ones. The very short time it took them to find food especially struck me, they seemed without searching about for it to find something directly they lighted on a tree and to be back with it again, one could almost say, in a moment.

“The young ones stuck flat against the stem of the tree they were on, not moving about or doing anything for themselves.

“Although the plantation was close to the wall, the birds not only were quite indifferent to me as I stood there watching them, but they took no notice at all of the traffic on the road, although there was an almost continuous procession of motors.”

Bird-and-Tree (Arbor Day) Competitions.

BIRDS AND ANTS.

WRITING in the *National Review* (June, 1916) on "Life in a Pinewood," Mr. W. H. Hudson discusses the question, "How do small birds safeguard their tender helpless fledglings from the ants?"

"I have said to myself a hundred times that birds, especially the small woodland species that nest on or near the ground, such as the Nightingale, Robin, Wren, Chiffchaff, Wood and Willow Wrens, and Tits that breed low down in old stumps, must occasionally have their nestlings destroyed by ants; yet I have never found a nest showing plainly that such an accident had occurred, nor had I seen anything on the subject in books about birds; and of such books I had read hundreds.

"The subject was in my mind when I received evidence from an unexpected quarter that tender fledglings are sometimes destroyed by ants. This was in an account of the Wren by a boy which I came upon in a bundle of Bird-and-Tree Competition essays from village schools in Lancashire, sent on to me to read and judge from the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds. The boy stated in his essay that having selected the Wren as his subject he watched the birds and looked for nests; that among the nests he found one containing five eggs, and that four young were hatched but were destroyed the same day by ants. I wrote to the master of the school, at Newburgh, near Wigan, and to the boy, Harry Southworth, asking for full particulars. The master's reply gave a satisfactory account of Harry as a keen and careful observer, and Harry's answer was that the nest was built in a small hole in a bank beside a brook, that he had kept his eye on it during the time the bird was sitting on her five eggs, that on his last visit he found the parent bird in a terrified state outside the nest, and that on examination he found four young birds had been hatched, and were all dead but still warm, and swarming with

small reddish-brown ants which were feeding on them.

"This goes to show that not only do ants sometimes attack the fledglings in the nest, but also that the parent birds in such cases are powerless to save their young from destruction. My conclusion was that small ground-nesting birds have an instinctive fear of ants and avoid building at places infested by them."

ALL the adverse circumstances of the War notwithstanding, the Elementary Schools have again entered well for the Competition. It is feared that not a few may lose, as some lost last year, masters invaluable in guiding and teaching the children; but the influence left must inspire the Team to give a good account of themselves to the absent teacher and counsellor on his return.

Bird-and-Tree Day, far from being the set celebration it is by official appointment in the United States, occurs at any and all times of the year in Schools adopting the R.S.P.B. scheme; and a large number of Festivals have taken place during the first half of 1916. Quieter than in happier times, they have served to stimulate the Cadets and to give point and interest to the presentation of medals and awards and the reading of essays.

Woburn Boys' School, third in the Inter-County Competition, received book prizes and medals, on April 13th, from the hands of the Duchess of Bedford, who also gave four special prizes.

Middleton School, winners of the Warwickshire Shield, combined Empire Day and Bird Day. After an interesting address from the Vicar, and songs and recitations by the children, the headmaster (Mr. Hopkins) took the Team for a trip to Birmingham, where a long visit was paid

to the Art Gallery and its Natural History Section. Much as the exhibits were appreciated, it is interesting to hear that the stuffed birds were pronounced not so glossy or beautiful as the living ones, nor so pleasant to see. The jaunt was much enjoyed, some of the children, living five miles from a station, not having seen a train before.

The winners of the Second Prize for Hampshire, Botley, had their Festival on April 19th. The prizes were presented by Lady Jenkyns, who gave an encouraging address; and appropriate songs and recitations by the children were followed by the planting ceremony, when Mrs. Osborne performed the leading part and congratulated the children on the success to which the tree would bear lasting witness. The School is starting a "Bird - and - Tree Library."

At Ellesborough (Bucks) an excellent address on the educational side of the Society's work was given by the Rev. S. W. Vardon, Rector, and the awards presented by Miss Constance Britton.

The nesting-time, of delight and charm to the bird-student, invariably brings with it stories and complaints of nest-destruction and of cruelty to nestlings, on the part of village children. A writer in the *Yorkshire Telegraph* gives a concrete example of the egg-robbing which goes on, by furnishing in detail a list of 87 nests, containing 411 eggs, which he watched. Of these eggs 377 were taken and only 31 hatched: of the Thrushes' 125 there remained but 2, of the Robins' 21 but 1. "Surely," adds this writer, "more can be learned from watching the birds than from gazing at the eggs in a glass-covered box stuffed with dirty cotton-wool or sawdust." Probably, however, the great majority were merely sucked or smashed. The best cure for this sort of thing is the R.S.P.B. Bird and Tree Competition, which awakens genuine interest in wild life, and a bird-lover could do few things better for the bird-life of the countryside than establish the scheme in the nearest rural or suburban school.

IN THE COURTS.

PROTECTION OF SWANS.—At *Workington* (Cumberland), on May 10th, two young men were fined 15s. each for taking two eggs from a wild Swan's nest at Siddick Ponds. The Chairman said it was a pity these all too rare birds were not allowed to breed unmolested.

BIRD-CATCHING.—At *West Ham*, on March 27th, a father and son, both named Robert Mann, of Haggerston, were fined 40s. each for cruelty to decoy Linnets and for taking on Leyton marshes twelve Chaffinches, four Titlarks, a Linnet, and a Lark. The bird-catching apparatus was confiscated, and an order made for all the birds to be released.

ILLEGAL POSSESSION.—At *Birmingham*, on May 30th, Joseph Cooper was summoned by the Birmingham S.P.C.A. for illegal possession of newly-caught birds, and fined 10s. (2s. 6d. per bird) and costs, the birds to be liberated. (Mr. E. Wallington Butt having recently resigned, Miss D. Sydney Vince is now Secretary of the Birmingham Society and must be congratulated on this conviction.)

NOTE.—The publication of Mr. Frank Bonnett's paper on Bird-Protection in relation to the Preservation of Game is unavoidably postponed. It will appear in the Autumn Number of *Bird Notes and News*.

CORRECTION.—The name of the Bridgwater Field Club was accidentally omitted from the list of subscriptions in the Society's Annual Report.

BIRD NOTES AND NEWS (issued quarterly) will be sent post free to any address for 1s. per annum, payable in advance; single numbers, 3d.

To Members of the Society subscribing 5s. and upwards per annum it is forwarded gratis and post free.

Bird Notes & News

ISSUED QUARTERLY BY THE ROYAL SOCIETY
:: FOR THE PROTECTION OF BIRDS ::

Vol. VII.]

AUTUMN, 1916.

[No. 3.]

Game Preservation and the Protection of Birds.

By FRANK BONNETT ("East Sussex").

ANYONE who sets himself the task of discussing the question of Wild Bird Preservation in its relation to Game Preserving must needs tread upon ground that is often difficult and sometimes dangerous. In his list of "Vermin" the game-keeper includes a large number of birds, some of which may at times be harmful to his interests, while others may actually do him more good than harm, and others again may be entirely harmless so far as he is concerned. Of recent years game-keepers—or at least some of them—have shewn a better discrimination in dealing with this question of so-called "vermin" destruction—a result which may be attributed partly to the good efforts of individuals and societies and partly to the better legislation on these matters that has been introduced. The modern game-keeper, as a rule, is also a man of better education than his predecessors, and very frequently he is something of a naturalist as well.

At the same time, a good deal of ignorance and foolish prejudice still undoubtedly exists, and it is to be feared that in out-of-the-way parts of the country where things may be done unseen, the laws regarding the protection of wild birds generally are not only often ignored or never thought of, but sometimes wilfully transgressed. The difficulty of enforcing these laws can readily

be imagined, but it is much to be regretted that when offenders are caught—and the breaking of these laws is by no means confined to gamekeepers—they are not more heavily dealt with. Rare, useful, or harmless birds would be destroyed much less often if the penalties for being in illegal possession of such birds as these were increased. Taxidermists' shops should be subject to periodical inspection by the police, while it should be compulsory on all bird-stuffers to keep a register—similar to that which game-dealers are obliged to keep—shewing full particulars of every bird brought to their establishments. Such a regulation as this would do far more good than all the rest of the laws put together.

But while other persons besides gamekeepers—not excepting even those who in the guise of "collectors" are often instrumental in bringing about the extermination of many species of birds—have done a great deal of harm in the matter of destroying bird-life generally, it is the game-keeper who is mainly responsible for the disappearance of so many of our once common birds of prey and for reducing the numbers of other species which we can ill afford to lose. Birds like the Peregrine, the Hobby, the Merlin, the Common and Honey Buzzards, and the Raven are now, as everyone knows,

rarely or never seen in places where they were once quite common, while other less rare birds, like the Kestrel, the Sparrowhawk, and Owls of several species, have been greatly reduced in numbers, if not actually exterminated in certain districts. A large part of this destruction—as in the case of the Honey Buzzard, the Owl and the Kestrel—has been brought about through ignorance, for with the more ignorant class of game-keeper it is the rule never to give any bird of prey the benefit of the doubt.

An old keeper once remarked to me, in reply to a suggestion that he should shew more discrimination where “vermin” were concerned, that he considered it best to “make sure” in every case. “When they be alive,” he said, “I don’t know what manner of mischief they may be up to, but when they be dead, I *knows* they can do no harm.” Was there ever such a confession of ignorant stupidity and of a lack of that very knowledge which it is a keeper’s business to possess? Another keeper of my acquaintance once shewed me with evident delight, where a Woodpecker’s nest had been cut out of a tree, and on my asking him why this achievement gave him so much satisfaction, he assured me that Green Woodpeckers were “mischievous birds.” “How do they interfere with you?” I enquired. “Surely they do no harm to game?” To which my intelligent friend replied, “Don’t they, by Jove! Just look at their beaks!” It is only fair to add that this man was a cockney who had taken up game-keeping late in life, but how any game-preserve could be found to employ a person of such ignorance is not easy to understand. Against the Night-jar, however, it can hardly be urged that its beak betrays its evil habits as a destroyer of

game, yet one has heard even that unoffending and useful bird accused of malpractices in this direction! There are certain people who always seem ready to believe anything bad of birds whose habit it is to prey upon smaller creatures for their subsistence, and such people seem to take a positive delight in exaggerating to the greatest possible extent these real or imaginary vices. That birds, like human beings and other creatures, do develop vices on occasion no one will deny, but it is a mistake to talk of these backslidings as if they were the general rule, and it is also unfair to dub a natural habit a vice, just because it happens to appear to be one according to the way of thinking of the person concerned.

A short time ago a letter appeared in the public press suggesting that every Peregrine in the country should be destroyed because Peregrines have been known to take Homing Pigeons on the wing. The argument was that since Pigeons are now being again employed by the War Office for conveying messages, much harm might be done by the intercepting of these useful messengers by birds of prey. The writer was evidently unaware that when an important message is despatched, it is entrusted not to one Pigeon, but to several, and he would have done far more useful work had he used his endeavours to suppress those irresponsible gunners who, being in the habit of shooting everything at sight, account for the destruction of Homing Pigeons and other useful birds in large numbers every year. I heard of a man the other day, who has been in the habit of shooting Homing Pigeons ever since the war broke out, his idea, apparently, being that he might one day intercept some enemy message in this way. It was quite news to him that such a pro-

cedure is illegal, and he waxed indignant when some British owner of Homing Pigeons threatened to prosecute him for shooting one of his birds. There is far too great laxity in this country in the matter of granting gun licences, while thousands of people shoot every year without any licence at all. It is persons of this description who are largely responsible for the shooting of rare and useful birds.

Since the passing of the Pole Trap Act, the lives of many innocent birds, such as Owls of sorts, Hawks and Falcons, have been saved, but it is to be feared that this style of trapping still continues in remote parts of the country. Law or no law, no decent game-preserver ought ever to allow so hideous an engine of destruction to be used on his property, nor ought the use of "platform" traps or artificial nests, baited with eggs and containing a concealed trap, to be permitted. These platform traps are used mainly with the object of trapping Jays and Magpies—two species whose crimes against the game-preserver are without doubt greatly exaggerated. It is well-known that a Magpie will, if it happen to come across the nest of Partridge or Pheasant, be tempted to take the eggs, but it is ridiculous to suppose that the Magpie's principal diet during the nesting season consists of the eggs of these birds. The nests of common wild birds abound in every wood and hedgerow at the time when the Pheasants and Partridges are laying, and these nests are so easily found that any Magpie can obtain sufficient food of this description almost without the trouble of looking for it. The eggs of game-birds are far more difficult to find, and a hungry Magpie looking for eggs would certainly take these last of all. I have always thought

it very unfair of the game-keeper to bait his traps with the eggs of Blackbirds and Thrushes, and I believe him to do so because these prove to be a more attractive bait than the eggs of game-birds. That in itself seems to be an admission on the keeper's part that Magpies and Jays prefer the eggs of small birds to those of game. Where the nest of a game-bird is so exposed that it is readily found by a Magpie, the chances are that that nest would have been destroyed in some other way had the Magpie never found it, and it is supposed to be every keeper's business to remove the eggs from such exposed places before they are stolen or destroyed.

In regard to Rooks and Crows, which usually figure largely in the keeper's list of vermin, I would not condemn the shooting of certain individuals of either species when they take to destroying the eggs or young of game-birds. I know from experience that at times one or two Rooks or Crows of particularly depraved taste will take to these bad habits, and if they are allowed to persist in them, they will teach their comrades to do the same. On the other hand I know that when these one or two sinners have been destroyed, the mischief will usually cease, and the destruction of one or two birds may in this way be the means of saving others as well as putting an end to the trouble from the keeper's point of view. It is mostly in long periods of dry weather, when animal food is scarce, that Rooks and Crows take to visiting game preserves, but in any case the season during which these birds can do the game-keeper harm is a short one.

In many parts of the country, as I am happy to say, far greater respect than heretofore is shown for Owls. I know of some

villages where the Barn-Owl is considered almost a sacred bird, and in one of these I was very pleased a few days ago to see one of these handsome birds flying about in broad daylight. A keeper who happened to be with me at the time told me that the bird had done this for the last five or six years, but that its mate never came out till dusk. He knew where the birds nested, and assured me that they reared a brood safely every year. In another village, where Barn Owls had inhabited the church roof from time immemorial, the Vicar and churchwardens, with the approval of the parishioners, went to the additional expense of taking off part of the roof, when the church was being repaired, in order that the Owls might be saved from being bricked in as they would have been had they not been caught and liberated before the work was finished. These birds, or their descendants, are still about, having since taken up their abode close by in a large walnut tree with several holes in it and in the neighbouring barns. If everyone were as fond of their Owls as these Hampshire villagers, these birds would benefit greatly in consequence.*

Barn and other Owls have often been accused of taking young game-birds from the rearing-field, and it may happen that such things have actually occurred and in this manner. The Owl, attracted to the field by the presence of rats and mice, which are sure to gather where food is to be found, hovers around the coops at dusk and making a dash at a mouse or rat close to a coop, perhaps frightens the hen, who in her commotion scares the chicks from under her. One or two of the chicks probably

run out, and the Owl catching sight of something moving, pounces upon it before it knows what it has got. The moral of this is that keepers should be careful not to overfeed their birds or to leave lying about food which will attract rats and mice, for in the absence of the latter the Owls are not likely to pay the rearing-field a visit. The young of wild Pheasants and Partridges ought to be safely under their mothers' wings by the time Owls are abroad, so that there is but little for the gamekeeper to fear from the Owls in this direction. Seeing that the rat is one of the worst—if not quite the worst—of the enemies of game, it is to the keeper's interest to preserve these useful birds in every possible way rather than destroy them.

Kestrels are attracted to the rearing-field in the same manner as Owls—namely, by the presence of vermin. The intelligent keeper immediately understands the reason for the birds' presence and regards them as his allies, while the ignorant man jumps to the conclusion that the Kestrels are "arter the birds" and endeavours to trap or shoot them. It is very seldom that a Kestrel will interfere with young game-birds, and I remember a case in Sussex in which three pairs of these birds nested in a plantation adjoining the rearing-field. All day long these birds were about the place, but never did they attempt to touch a bird, as the keeper freely acknowledged, and he did nothing to molest them. But Kestrels will occasionally take to bad habits, and the killing of one or two may be the means, as already suggested, of saving the lives of others of the same species. A keeper must shew discrimination in matters of this sort. I am glad to say that I have met many keepers in the last few years who do judge

* The Rev. Julian Tuck, Rector of Tostock, in Suffolk, wrote to the Society this spring (1916) that the Tawny Owl was nesting in his church tower for the tenth consecutive year; and that he had another sitting on her eggs in a nesting-box, so tame that she did not move or even open her eyes when he paid her a visit.

cases on their merits, and do not shoot every bird that flies simply because they think it may do harm to game. A word from his employer will often help a man to think and to act in a more sensible manner; and game-preservers should remember that they have friends as well as enemies among the birds too commonly classed as vermin, and that a too zealous keeper may do more harm than good in destroying wholesale. Quite apart from this aspect of the matter, surely any man who calls himself a true sportsman and wishes to live up to that ideal, can understand the meaning of "live and let live" in a matter of this sort. And surely, too, there is an added pleasure to every shooting expedition and to every walk around one's property when something besides game is to be seen. Are there not some of us, fonder perhaps of shooting than of hunting, yet who like to see a fox some-

times when we are out for Pheasants, and in the same way is it not rather pleasing when one is waiting for the beaters to come up, to watch a company of Jays holding high revelry in the tree-tops or a Kestrel hovering gracefully over an adjoining field ere he stoops to earth like a flash of lightning to gather up some living morsel that his wonderful eye has discerned from two hundred yards above? One of the most beautiful things I ever witnessed was a Hawk swooping from an immense height at a small bird, which, incidentally, he missed by a matter of inches. No man in this country is more keen on shooting than I am, but for the sake of that sight I would have let go by the best cock-Pheasant that ever flew. And yet, I suppose, there are not a few whose first thought on seeing that brave bird swooping from the sky would have been to shoot it!

Birds in the War Area.

MR. F. GOODYEAR, R.E., writes from France (July 8th):—

I am much interested in your article in the Summer Number on Birds in the War Area. The article in the *Times* of June 7th I had seen and, though that referred to a beech wood, I found that it mentioned almost exactly the same lot of birds as I had seen in a poplar wood. It struck me that the large anonymous Hawk was surely a Peregrine. Golden Orioles were quite new to me, and they have impressed me with their tropical habits—the elusiveness of their call, its mellowness, their amazingly brilliant flight, high up from tree to tree—they seem made for the deep shadows of a far sunnier land than Flanders during these last few weeks. I find that the bright colour of the male is not without protective value when brilliant sunshine falls through a broken canopy of leaves. As for the Nightingales,

during May I lived in a chateau where about six pairs were nesting in the grounds. One was frequently singing within a few feet of our window: and I seldom went in or out without catching glimpses of their chestnut tails as they whisked into a clump of bushes or the lower boughs of a tree. They were a perpetual delight.

The number and variety of the Warblers has also been noteworthy. And I first made the acquaintance of the Great Reed Warbler out here.

Referring to Mr. Waldegrave Little's letter, I know of a regular haunt of Willow-Wrens in a wooded marsh. One was there as early as March 29th. But I do not think he stayed: the present occupiers appeared ten days or a fortnight later. When he says he can't identify the "Oriôl-ole," I think he's joking. His syllabization of the note gives the show away: though it is not the size of a Cuckoo, of course. The first time I heard the Oriole,

I failed to see it and did not know the note. Then a man who had been to the same place described the same note to me and said that it was made by five "yellow magpies." Still I was mystified. He said that a Frenchman had told him the name, and he proceeded to look up "Pie" (which I told him was the French for Magpie) in a pocket dictionary. On seeing the entry "Pie (ornith) Magpie," he exclaimed, "That's it—that's the name," indicating "(ornith)." Then it suddenly dawned on me—ornith—oriole: and a day or two later I was able to verify my inference in person.

As for the bird that calls at night like a big frog, isn't it a frog? This is a tremendous country for frogs. But what interests me most of all in his letter is failure before the "Wit-wit-it" bird. I would sell my tired soul to get a sight of that bird. I have pages of notes on it. My own version of the cry is "Whitt-wit-whitt," which is pretty nearly the same as his. It runs in the crops and ditches. The note is given with great violence, so that you can hear it a long way off. Sometimes I have thought it was a sort of frog. I wish somebody could throw some light upon it.

Is the Blue-headed Wagtail an inhabitant of these parts? I think I have seen it, but without adequate books of reference cannot be sure. A peculiarity of the place I was at down till May 27th was the absence of House Martins. It was a village with plenty of nesting-sites, and Swallows were plentiful. But I saw only two Martins down to the day I was moved.

Last autumn I was glad to see a few Wild Geese going over. Imagine a man doing his two hours on a G.H.Q. guard, than which nothing is more tedious, and his delight at the unexpected appearance of a few Wild Geese close overhead! Last autumn I saw Black Redstarts at one or two places in the area of the present offensive. And on April 28th, I saw a Pied Flycatcher near Armentières.

It is years since I had such a chance of watching Cuckoos. A thing that has struck me is that the bubbling note is not unlike the first syllable of the Cuckoo note, repeated very fast. In fact, it is sometimes impossible to say whether the bird has said "cuckuck," or has done a disyllabic bubble and stopped. When the Cuckoo doubles the first syllable

of "cuckoo," he seems to start on a higher note, about the same as that on which he bubbles. I have heard the "cuckoo" note this morning, but suppose I cannot expect it to go on much longer. In fact, I scarcely remember hearing it so late as July 8th.

I am not in the firing line, but thoroughly agree with Mr. Little that the habit of noting birds, etc., affords a great relaxation out here.

[The 'Wit-wit-wit' bird is the Quail, whose cry is generally rendered "Wet-my-lips." Mr. Goodyear was probably right as to the Blue-headed Wagtail.—ED. B. N. & N.]

The Petrograd Society of Naturalists has appealed to all nature-lovers to report to it any information they may gather as to the influence of military operations upon the life of birds and animals, and any deviations from the normal conditions, numbers, or routes in migration.

According to the observations of Russian naturalists, as reported by the Petrograd correspondent of the *Times* (July 29th), during the first year of the war Jackdaws and Rooks disappeared from the war area, Larks no longer sang in the fields, and even Sparrows grew very scarce. The Eagle, a constant resident of the Carpathians, migrated to the Balkans, and the wild Pigeon disappeared also. Professor D. N. Kaigorodov mentions that an extraordinary movement of Geese northward had recently been reported to him. It is evident that these birds could not settle in Mitau and White Russia owing to the military operations. The same is true with regard to Duck. He adds: "Individual species of birds which ordinarily carry out their migratory flight through Poland appeared some time ago on the island of Ezel. In the Tauride province last year an abundance of every kind of bird was observed, particularly those species which migrate through the Carpathians. Birds whose nests were usually in localities affected by the war were compelled to abandon their homes and migrate to other places."

The French ornithologist, M. Cunisset-Carnot, states that in districts in the fighting line the birds became greatly disturbed, flying about and screeching night and day. Among the migrants, those which dwell

south of the war zone carried out their flight to the warm lands in the customary direction, but began it somewhat earlier than usual—as, for example, the Storks. But migrants dwelling north of the war zone skirted the line of the front and, instead of flying through France, flew through Switzerland and Italy. Blackbirds, for instance,

which usually fly southward every year in huge flocks from Germany and Scandinavia through Burgundy did not appear there. Similarly no Larks were seen in October. In Flanders and Holland there were neither marsh- nor water-birds.

More decisive data will no doubt be noted this autumn.

The Protection of Birds' Eggs.

IN April of the present year an advertisement appeared in the *Times* informing "ornithologists or country folk in a position to find this season's nests" of certain named birds, that they might "profitably write" to a box number at the office of the paper. Persons who replied to the advertisement were informed that the advertiser was prepared to pay for clutches of the eggs of these birds, provided that such eggs were in all cases "the complete set laid by the same bird preparatory to incubation," with none cracked, broken, or blown. A second communication, received even where no reply to the first was sent, enclosed a box "that will hold at least two clutches"—"on the assumption that you will be successful in finding me at least one or two clutches." The letters were signed by Mr. Edgar P. Chance, a collector well known to ornithologists.

A large number of protests reached the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds, deprecating this wholesale incentive to egg-depredations, and urging the Society to prosecute, especially as the three birds specified—two of them insectivorous migrants—are interesting and not too common species.

The eggs of all three species are protected by County Council Orders under the Wild Birds Protection Acts in a considerable number of counties. In one case they are scheduled by twenty-four English and Welsh Orders, in another by fourteen, and in the third by eleven Orders. In no case, seemingly, where persons wrote from these areas, did Mr. Chance inform his correspondents that the eggs were protected and therefore should not be taken in those districts, nor did he warn them that by such infringement of the law they would render themselves liable to a fine of £1 for each egg,

The Society placed the matter in the hands of their solicitors, and a letter was sent to Mr. Chance, stating that—

"The Society before deciding upon the steps which in the circumstances it is their duty to take, desire us to obtain an explanation from you as to the reason why, for the purposes of your collection, it is assumed, you ignore and set at defiance the Acts for protecting wild birds. You are, we gather, a collector of experience, and not one who could plead ignorance of the Statutes and Orders affecting wild birds."

To this letter Mr. Chance replied by sending a representative to call upon the firm, who ultimately suggested (without prejudice) that the Society might withhold proceedings if Mr. Chance would undertake for the future not to collect, or incite other persons to collect, eggs of wild birds in districts where they are protected by Wild Birds Protection Orders. On this Mr. Chance wrote:—

"I am quite willing to do all that I reasonably can to observe the Acts for the protection of wild birds and the County Council Orders, if for no better reason than that I have every sympathy with the objects which, I presume, the Society have in view, viz., the preservation and protection of our wild birds."

As this letter contained no definite undertaking to respect the law, nor any explanation of the fact that (in spite of his sympathy with the objects the Society have in view), the writer had incited to widespread infringement of the Acts, the solicitors wrote again; in acknowledgment they received a personal visit from Mr. Chance, and his verbal assurance that he would perform the undertaking he had given to the best of his ability, but would not add to it, and could not undertake to

discontinue the collection of eggs in districts where they are not protected. As this is by implication an assurance that Mr. Chance will discontinue the taking of eggs in districts where they *are* protected—which was the cause of complaint—there the matter rests for the present; it is hoped that the assur-

ance given will be observed, and that the Society will have no occasion in future years to proceed to further measures.

It may be added that the *Times* has courteously promised that no further announcements of the kind shall appear in its columns.

The Royal Society for the Protection of Birds.

COUNCIL MEETING.

THE Council held their quarterly meeting on July 21st, 1916, at the Middlesex Guildhall, S.W., when there were present: Mr. Montagu Sharpe, Chairman (in the chair), Miss Clifton, Hon. Mrs. Drewitt, Dr. Drewitt, Miss Hall, Hon. Mrs. Henniker, Mr. F. E. Lemon (Hon. Sec.), Mr. Meade-Waldo, Mr. Ogilvie-Grant, and Miss Pollock, and the Secretary (Miss Gardiner).

Hon. Secretary's Report.

The Hon. Secretary reported that three lectures had been given by the Rev. J. E. Kelsall, and ten Bird-and-Tree Festivals held. Correspondence had taken place with regard to the use of air-guns, and it was proposed to send a circular letter to County Councils, pointing out the requirements of the Gun Licence Act, 1870. With reference to an advertisement which had appeared in the *Times* inciting persons to collect clutches of the eggs of certain birds, the action taken and contemplated was reported and approved.

Finance and General Purposes Committee.

The accounts for the quarter were presented, showing a considerable falling-off from the normal returns, especially in the Watchers Fund. The appointment of Mr. E. W. Royston as Hon. Secretary for Cambridge was confirmed, and the following Fellows and Members were elected:

FELLOWS: Miss Leonore Adlercron (Burstow); Dr. R. W. S. Bishop (Bedale); A. K. Carlyon (Harrow Weald); Lady Fry (Bristol); Captain Philip Gosse (Beaulieu); F. J. Hanbury (East Grinstead); Captain Scott-Hopkins (Malta); Lady Mildmay (Dogmersfield); Miss Mabel Thornton (Chislehurst); Mrs. Watts (Yelverton).

MEMBERS: Arthur Austin (Brighton); F. L. Bland (Ipswich); A. Townshend Cobbold (Ipswich); Bernard Ellis (Leicester); Miss Margery Fry (Birmingham); Miss G. C. Harrison (Chesham Bois); Percy Harrison (Birmingham); Miss Herring-Cooper (Chislehurst); Miss Hilda Howard, Miss Louie Howard (Blackburn); J. M. Howell (Aberdovey); Salusbury M. Mellor (I.W.); Henry Miller (Ipswich); Dr. Charles Pollard (Worcester); W. L. Sclater (London, S.W.); H. L. Theobald (London, N.W.); Frank Thurston (Stroud); Miss Nellie Wilson (Peebles).

LIFE MEMBERS: J. E. Hurtley (Harrogate) Douglas J. B. Wilson (Dumbarton).

General Business.

Correspondence relating to the Bird-Protection Law of Malta was considered. The ordinance issued in 1911 having proved insufficient to prevent the excessive destruction of bird-life (involving possible extermination of certain species on the island), and being in other respects faulty, it was agreed to recommend a close-time for all birds during the breeding-season. Plume-trade smuggling in India, the killing of Peregrines in Yorkshire, and suggestions as to a proposed Bird Sanctuary, were among other subjects discussed.

Next meeting of the Council, October 20th.

OBITUARY.

MRS. PHILLIPS.

OF the many men and women of distinction and ability who have taken part in the work for the protection of Wild Birds, no name and memory will be held in greater respect and affection than that of Mrs. Eliza Phillips, whose death on August 18th, at the age of 93, has regretfully to be recorded. In early life, through her marriage in 1847 with Robert Montgomerie Martin, she was well known in the literary world. He was the author of voluminous Colonial Histories and other works, was employed by the Marquis Wellesley to arrange his Indian despatches and correspondence for publication, and later was private secretary to the "great Pro-Consul's" greater brother, the Duke of Wellington; she assisted him in his literary work, and at Apsley House and Strathfieldsaye was accustomed to meet many of the great persons of the day. She had memories too of S. T. Coleridge, whom she as a girl met at Highgate. After her husband's death in 1868, during a voyage home from the Continent her attention was drawn to the sufferings of cattle on shipboard, and from that time she began definitely to devote herself to the cause of animals. Her long connexion with the Tunbridge Wells S.P.C.A., of which she was for many years the life and soul, dated from her second marriage, in 1874, to the Rev. Edward Phillips (sometime Vicar of St. Mark's, Surbiton), when she removed from Wellesley Lodge, Sutton, to Culverden Castle, Tunbridge Wells.

In 1891, a leaflet from her pen on the use of birds in millinery was read by Miss Hannah Poland, then a local Hon. Secretary for the little league of ladies banded together, under the name of the Society for the

Protection of Birds, to stem this abuse. A letter from Miss Poland at once engaged Mrs. Phillips' sympathy, and she became Vice-President of the young Society at the same time that the Duchess of Portland accepted the Presidentship and Miss C. V. Hall the Treasurership; while through her interest, Elizabeth Duchess of Wellington became one of its early supporters. Mrs. Phillips immediately engaged in active efforts to press forward the Society's aims and influence. When in 1893 the first Committee was appointed, to establish the Society on a wider and more secure basis, she became its first chairman; and though succeeded in this post the following year by Mr. W. H. Hudson, she continued for years an active member of the committee and had been a member of the Council since the re-constitution of the Society by Royal Charter in 1904. Her name heads the roll of the Society's members, and she had been a Fellow since the institution of that order.

Mrs. Phillips' labours were keenest in the early days of the Society, when the Committee met at Jermyn-street in the rooms of the R.S.P.C.A. and a London office was yet in the future. She had then the control of the Society's publications; the Annual Reports were written mainly by her practised pen; and her contributions to its literature included its first leaflet "Destruction of Ornamental-Plumaged Birds," "Bird Food in Winter," "Mixed Plumes," "Appeal to British Boys and Girls," and "Murderous Millinery." This branch of the work, comments the Annual Report of 1895,

"had been in her hands since June 1891—the year in which the Society, then in its infancy, was transferred from Manchester to London. . . . After four years the Society is still living and growing to justify

its name; and this result is due in a great measure to Mrs. Phillips' unwearied devotion and tactful management."

In 1916, with a Society extended far beyond the limits of twenty years ago, the tribute to Mrs. Phillips' work cannot be less sincere. She was also a frequent speaker at the Annual Meetings, eloquent by reason of her deep feeling and intimate knowledge. It is not without touching significance that her last utterance on the Society's platform in 1902 was devoted to inspiring and stimulating the campaign, then newly inaugurated, among children, the workers of the future, by means of Bird - and - Tree Competitions, her speech ending with the characteristic words:—

"The establishment of a Bird-and-Tree Day by promoting the study of Nature among all classes will do noble work, for it must tend to spread abroad in the hearts of both teachers and pupils the best and surest, nay, the only efficient motive power for good—the Love of God."

Mrs. Phillips was left a widow for a second time in 1891, and shortly afterwards took up her residence at Vaughan House, Croydon, where she died. She had been in failing health for some time, but until very recently was able to interest herself in the daily paper and in reading her favourite Greek poets; and her death occurred quite suddenly and peacefully. Her nobility of character, a bent of mind perhaps somewhat masculine, and a deep sincerity of purpose, made up a personality which impressed itself upon all who knew her, and has left its mark on many phases of work in the humanitarian world.

The death has also to be chronicled of two other friends of the Society, whose membership dates from a very early period.

Mr. J. A. Harvie-Brown, F.R.S.E. (Scot.) of Dunipace House, Stirlingshire, had been a constant correspondent and supporter of the work since 1892, when his first donation, of £10, started the young Society's banking account. He was the author of some 250 books and papers on ornithological and allied subjects.

Captain Chippindall-Healey became Hon. Secretary for Havant in 1896, and on leaving that district took up the work at Hove, resigning, through ill-health, only in 1913, and retaining his kindly interest to the last.

Captain J. M. Charlton, who was killed in France on his 25th birthday (July 1, 1916), was one of the most talented of the younger generation of bird-students, and won the R.S.P.B. Bronze Medal in the Public School Essay Competition in 1910. He had been recommended for the Military Cross. He was a son of Mr. John Charlton, the eminent artist; and his brother, Lieut. H. V. Charlton, who was killed in action a week earlier, was a rising painter of birds and animals.

THE USE OF AIR-GUNS.

THE following letter has been addressed to the County and Borough Councils of Great Britain by the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds:—

"The Council of the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds beg to call the attention of County Councils, as the local Taxation Authority, to the urgent need for enforcing the Gun Licence Act, 1870 (33 & 34 Vict. c. 57), as regards the use of Air-guns.

"The definition clause of the Act is as follows:—

"In this Act the term 'gun' includes a fire-arm of any description and an *air-gun* or any other kind of gun from which any shot, bullet, or other missile can be discharged."

"Repeated complaints have reached this Society of the use of these guns by careless and mischievous boys and youths who obtain them without difficulty or restriction and who pay no licence.

"Air-guns are frequently made use of:—

(a) for shooting at, maiming, and killing wild birds, in disregard of legal prohibitions. Such cases are so numerous that it is needless to cite specific instances, but it may be mentioned that one firm recently advertised their particular weapon in a boys' paper by a picture of two Owls killed by this gun;

(b) for shooting at both wild and domestic animals, injuring and irritating where no greater harm is done;

(c) for pointing at children and grown persons, in play or with intent to intimidate, and to the danger of the public. An instance may be cited from the Middlesex Sessions of April 8th last, when four members of a gang of boys were convicted of theft, and it was shown that this gang had become a nuisance to the neighbourhood by shooting at fowls and domestic animals, and had stolen money from another boy by intimidating him with a powerful Air-gun, when the movement of a finger would have meant a bullet in his brain. Cases are also instanced in which, for purposes of theft, youths have "held up" persons in charge of small shops, and in which trains have been shot at, to the manifest danger of the passengers.

"The likelihood of persons not observed by the shooter being hit and injured by missiles from these weapons, is obvious, and has been demonstrated by various accidents; and several cases have been reported to the Society of injuries to children arising out of attempts to shoot animals and birds.

"A toy pocket-pistol has been held to be a gun within the meaning of the Act (*Campbell v. Hadley*, 40 J.P. 756), and a licence should be required if it is an instrument "from which any shot, bullet, or other missile can be discharged."

From the replies received it appears that the authorities in several counties have been active in checking this nuisance,

and that not a few prosecutions have taken place recently; in one county twelve were instituted in one month. "My Council," comments the Town Clerk of Liverpool, "have always paid close attention to the use of Air-guns in the City, as some time ago serious injuries resulted from their misuse by children." In another case it is mentioned that prosecutions have also taken place in respect of pocket-pistols and that a considerable number of these have been confiscated by the Police. The Chief Constable of Birmingham says: "We have been in communication with the Home Office on the subject, and have pointed out that the existing law does not appear to be strong enough to meet the present state of things. I have also been in communication with the Military Authorities, suggesting that an Order should be made prohibiting the sale of these articles except under certain restrictions." The Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis issued a special notice in June, "with a view to prevent these dangerous and illegal practices," calling the attention of sellers of air- and spring-guns to the provisions of the Act, and stating that the police had been instructed to enforce the law strictly.

Anyone finding boys or youths shooting Wild Birds with these guns should at once give information to the police.

CHRISTMAS CARD.

Mr. Archibald Thorburn has kindly painted one of his charming bird-pictures for the annual greeting-card of the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds. It is entitled "Somewhere in France," and special verses will help to make it the most appropriate of messages for the season 1916-17.

Notes.

THE interest attaching to Easter Island, long a problem to archæologists on account of the huge and mysterious stone statues bequeathed to it by some unknown race of an unknown era, has been increased by a paper read at the British Association on September 10th by Mrs. Scoresby Routledge. The natives of this island, she said, took a great interest in the arrival of the migratory birds in summer, and there was a sort of "Derby" for possession of the first egg laid. The man who found it made the fact known with great jubilation, and afterwards shaved his head with solemn oblation. Chronology was maintained through the names of the men who had secured the first egg of the season. After the finder got his egg he went to the mountain, followed by his happy relations, and there there were general rejoicings. The egg was afterwards hung on the ceiling of the man's house for one year, and then buried at the top of the mountain. When the life of the "Bird Man" came to an end he also was buried on the mountain under some stones.

* * *

The records of Scottish wild birds, as chronicled in the *Scottish Naturalist* (July-August, 1916) shows an extension of the breeding-range of the Crested Tit and the Gannet. The Tit, which is exclusively a Scottish species and nests in a very few districts, is the subject of constant persecution by the collector; so that the news of fresh habitats given by Mr. Ogilvie-Grant and Mr. Berry is peculiarly welcome. The Gannet, which has colonised no new sites for many years, has several nesting-grounds in Scotland and Ireland, and one in Wales,

but, it is to be feared, has been finally driven away from Lundy, its one English breeding-site, since the efforts of the Society in that island failed of effect. This year the new site recorded is on the Noup of Noss, Bressay, a district in which the Watchers of the R.S.P.B. are active.

* * *

Though facts as to the immense importation of timber into this country, and the grave problems presented by the needs of the War, must have pressed home the necessity for afforestation, it would appear that Government and other authorities remain as blind to the need for systematic planting as they are to the need for the special protection of insectivorous birds. A writer in *Country Life* (July 20, 1916), says: "We are cutting down our stock of wood for pit-props and railway sleepers to such an extent that whole districts of Surrey are being denuded of trees. No steps are being taken to replace these lost treasures. Richard Jefferies once rejoiced over his belief that the world could not "cut down clouds"; but an American writer has pointed out that this is precisely what is done by the drastic cutting down of trees: the land in due course loses its moisture and its fertility. By the time Bird-and-Tree Day is adopted nationally, as a means of education essential to country children, the axe and the caterpillar together may have changed the face and the climate of England.

* * *

Various views as to the caging of wild birds are held by various persons; but apart from the bird-shop there is, perhaps, no

more melancholy sight for the lover of outdoor life than the municipal aviary, in a corner of the park or the museum, in which a dozen or so finches and buntings "represent" the bird-life of the locality. In a small enclosure, usually more or less in the dark, with dry sticks to hop up and down on, and food and water supplied at regulation hours by an attendant who probably regards them as a nuisance, they are there to be stared at casually by visitors, and to suggest, *inter alia*, municipal example in catching and caging wild birds. Active cruelty there is probably none, even where cleanliness is doubtful; but the singular futility of the whole thing is acutely depressing. They are not pets, for there is no one to pet them. They serve no purpose of the aviculturist. Those who do not care for birds never glance at them; those who do would certainly rather not see them there. Anyone wishing to study birds could take a tramcar into the country and find them under natural conditions. As for instructing the public, a dozen nesting-boxes and food-tables in the park, and its intelligent management as a Bird Sanctuary, would teach and delight the population more in a year than an aviary full of captives could do in all time.

* * *

A good many years ago, at a Conference of R.S.P.B. workers, Miss Clifton advocated the plan of making Bird Sanctuaries of all cemeteries. It is interesting to know that the idea is being widely adopted in the United States; and a charming leaflet on the subject, by Mr. Gilbert Pearson, has been issued by the Audubon Association. At present Omaha, Neb., claims to possess the largest of such sanctuaries. It contains 320 acres, and forty nesting-boxes and two bird-baths have been installed.

Nesting-boxes appear to afford opportunity for investigating the nesting-habits of other creatures besides birds. Commenting on the note in *Bird Notes and News* as to bees taking possession of boxes, Mr. R. W. B. Ellis sends two similar instances. One of these was remarkable. A Great Tit began to build in a nesting-box.

"After a mass of oak catkins, moss, etc., was collected in the bottom of the box, the first egg was laid before the nest was lined, or even shaped! On returning some time later I found the nest finished (though rather untidy-looking), but apparently containing no eggs. On investigating further, however, I found a lump of bumble-bee cells (containing grubs), a bumble-bee, and three Great Tit's eggs right down among the moss, etc., beneath the actual nest.

"It seemed probable that the Tits had deserted through the bee taking possession of their nest after the three eggs were laid, for I am certain the bee was not there before at least the first egg had been laid. But, how did the three eggs come to be *underneath* the nest?"

Probably the Tit built on top of the old half-made nest and eggs after the bee entered upon the scene. Whether it would have laid again, and what would have happened then, cannot unfortunately be known.

* * *

The *Scotsman's* "Nature Notes" of August 5th tell of an extraordinary colony of House-Martins in a village near Stratford-on-Avon. Its centre is a labourer's house, commonplace brick and tile, standing alone in a field, near three cattle-ponds. Last year the occupants thought they had more than enough of Martins, and, like many country people, they destroyed all the nests in the hope of discouraging the birds. When the Martins came back and marked the destruction they simply set to work, Briton-like, to "go one better"; and

surrounded the house with 86 nests. On the north side, in a space of 25 feet, they built fifty-six, on the south twenty-four, and on the east six. So close are they that in places they cluster in threes and fours, and so near together are the entrance-holes in some cases that neighbouring birds have had to feed their young at different times for want of space to get to the front door at the same moment. It is pleasant to hear that their persistence is to be rewarded. The cottage is to be named "Martin Home," and the occupant concludes "we must now

put up with the white-stockinged little gentry and the daily job of washing windows and cleaning up." Reckoning five young birds to each nest, the colony totalled 516 birds; and reckoning even 2,000 gnats, midges, winged weevils, and aphides as the daily consumption of each family (which is far below the estimates of naturalists) this colony must have consumed over a million of such pests. The sanitary inspectors of Warwickshire ought to present the tenant with a medal and unlimited wash-leathers.

Bird Protection in Canada.

A TREATY between Great Britain and the United States for the protection of insectivorous birds on both sides of the Canadian boundary, was signed on August 16, 1916, by Mr. Secretary Lansing and Sir Cecil Spring-Rice.

This is said to be the first treaty of the kind ever signed, and it constitutes one of the most memorable steps yet taken for the protection of wild birds; for it means that 1022 species and sub-species of the most interesting birds of North America will be protected from the Gulf of Mexico to the North Pole. In effect, it is an extension of the Federal law recently passed by the United States Government for the protection of migratory birds throughout the States. It provides (1) that no bird of value to agriculture in the destruction of insects shall be killed at any time; (2) that no open season for any species of game-bird shall extend for more than three and a half months; (3) that both countries shall so restrict open seasons for game birds as to prevent their being taken during the breeding season.

The work for obtaining this treaty was initiated in the United States two years ago by Senator McLean, who did yeoman service in passing the Act prohibiting the importation of plumage; it was approved by President Wilson, and by him transmitted to Congress on August 22, where it was ratified after only a few hours' debate on Aug. 29. "The swiftness with which Congress did its part in the matter amazed and delighted the defenders of the birds," says Dr. Hornaday, who has so powerfully supported every movement for the protection of wild life in the States.

In Canada, the burden of the work was borne by Dr. Gordon Hewitt, the Dominion Entomologist (a name well known to readers of *Bird Notes & News*), who toured through the Dominion to explain and commend the proposal. Before the treaty could be ratified it was necessary to procure the assent of every province, and for some time Nova Scotia and British Columbia were hard to convince. Dr. Hewitt's scientific knowledge of the value of insect-killing birds, however, at last won the day.

Commenting on the Treaty, the *New York Tribune* (September 5) says :

"It is a conservation measure of vast importance, destined not only to preserve to the American continent various species of game and insectivorous birds rapidly becoming extinct, but to save the American farmer millions on millions of dollars lost through the crop depredations of insects.

"The United States Department of Agriculture has estimated that insects damage the nation's crops to the vast extent of \$1,200,000,000 annually. Obviously, the interests of the people require that any practical step to lessen such stupendous loss should be taken. The Federal law, based on the theory that migratory birds were the

nation's property rather than the property of any state within whose boundaries they might happen to be at a given time, was one way of attacking this problem. Testimony from state officials, farmers' associations, conservation societies and sportsmen's organisations all over the country indicates that in the comparatively short time it has been in effect it has produced great benefit by increasing the number of birds. That benefit will be magnified by the extension of the principle of bird protection to Canada. The birds of a continent will be protected according to one broad scheme taking into consideration their breeding habits and districts, and that scheme may not be broken down according to the desires of the people of a given state or interrupted at the national boundary."

Bird-and-Tree (Arbor Day) Competitions.

EFFECTS of the War, in taking away teachers to fight and children to work, are of necessity marked in the Bird-and-Tree Competition this year. In some cases older boys and girls, who have left school during spring and summer to help on the land, have returned for one or two days in order to take part in the Essay-writing, knowing, it may be, all the more of their subjects for their work in the open; but the majority of Teams have either made up their numbers from the reserve Cadets or have unfortunately withdrawn from the Competition. A great many schools have, however, to be congratulated upon brave and successful efforts made, in spite of all difficulties and discouragements, to continue the work and do credit to reputations already made or in the making.

The Norfolk Essays were sent in earlier than those from other counties, and the Judges have awarded the Shield to Beechamwell School; Wereham and Great Dunham being bracketed for second place.

A condensed report on the whole competition will appear in the next number of *Bird Notes and News*.

The Secretary of the Cumberland Education Committee has set an example which

might be usefully followed. In view of the desecration of nature by the thoughtless conduct of persons who deface "beauty spots," damage trees and shrubs, uproot flowers, and leave unsightly litter about, the Committee are calling in the aid of the teachers of Secondary and Primary Schools. A brief paper dealing with the selfishness and folly of breaking down branches of trees, rooting up plants, destroying birds' nests and eggs, and throwing about waste paper, banana skins, bottles, and the like, has been drawn up and sent to the masters and mistresses of schools, with the request that it might be read to the scholars before the summer holiday. Bird-and-Tree Cadets do not, of course, do these things; Boy Scouts are supposed not to; but there is probably hardly a common or a street in the country which is not made less beautiful (or more ugly) than it need be by the curious love for destruction and for litter which seems to break forth when English people are outside their own homes.

"We are proud of our native land, and if we do anything to destroy its beauty or injure it in any way we are not true patriots. . . . There are many places open to the public, such as the properties of the National Trust, mountains, lakes, parks, and commons.

You, as one of the public, should help to protect them. Boys and girls can do this as well as grown-up people."

With a similar educational appeal in every county, a society like the "Beautiful Oldham Society" in every town, and a Bird-and-Tree Team in every school, much might be done to reform the vulgarian spirit.

IN THE COURTS.

PROTECTION OF GOLDFINCHES.—At *Lincoln* on September 12, Charles Claxton, described as a notorious birdcatcher, was fined 20s. for being in possession of five recently taken Goldfinches. He had sold them to a fitter for 5s., and two of them were dead when he was dropped upon by an Inspector of the R.S.P.C.A. He at first denied having anything to do with the birds, but afterwards said he got them from Nottinghamshire. The inspector found a braced bird at his house and took it out of the cage to examine it, when defendant knocked it out of his hand and the bird got away. Goldfinches are protected throughout the year in Nottinghamshire.

SHOOTING WILD DUCKS.—At *Woking*, on August 23, John Head, of Whitmoor Common, Worplesdon, was summoned for shooting a Wild Duck in the close time. Defendant said he had lived on the common forty years, and did not know that Wild Ducks were protected. As it was a first offence, the case was dismissed on payment of 10s. costs.

CAGED OWLS.—At *Oxford*, G. H. Nutt was convicted of having two Owls, recently caught, in a cage on his stall in Oxford Market on July 7. He said they were Norwegian birds. He was let off on payment of the costs, 4s., which would seem to intimate that Oxford does not set much value on its Owls. As scheduled birds the penalty might have been £1 each.

BOYS AND LINNETS.—At *Ashton*, on June 28, Robert Davidson a boy of 15, was severely reprimanded and ordered to pay costs, 5s. 6d., for possession of two Linnets. He had taken the nest and said he meant to bring up the young birds in a cage. The birds died. The case was instigated by the Oldham, Ashton and District Bird Protection

Society, who in order to protect local birds offered a reward of 10s. for information leading to the conviction of offenders against the Wild Birds Protection Acts and Orders.

CLOSE-TIME POSSESSION.—At the Victoria Courts, *Birmingham*, on June 27, William H. Ramsden was fined 5s. for being in possession of a newly taken Thrush. The bird was liberated. The case was brought by the Birmingham S.P.C.A.

GREETING CARD, 1916-17.

*"Perchance the heart may keep its songs of
spring
Even through the wintry dream of life's
December."*

"Somewhere in France."

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Printed by WITHERBY & Co., 326, High Holborn, W.C., and published by the ROYAL SOCIETY FOR THE PROTECTION OF BIRDS, 23, Queen Anne's Gate, S.W.



Photo, F. A. Swaine.

By Permission.

THE LATE CAPTAIN T. M. J. TAILBY, 11th Hussars,
Member of Council, Royal Society for the Protection of Birds, 1906-1916.

Bird Notes & News

ISSUED QUARTERLY BY THE ROYAL SOCIETY
:: :: FOR THE PROTECTION OF BIRDS :: ::

Vol. VII.]

WINTER, 1916.

[No. 4.]

Bird-Watching in 1916.

THE work of the Watchers' Committee of the R.S.P.B. this year has been affected by the war in more ways than one. The funds which make it possible have diminished seriously, so that the special fund is at present largely dependent upon the society's general income, itself much reduced. The efforts of the Watchers have been both helped and hindered by military regulations and the presence of military camps and patrols near protected areas. The majority of the staff are men over military age, but those accepted for Service have had to be replaced. The former chief Watcher at Brean Down in Somerset, Mr. Ernest Hawkings, is a Sergt.-Instructor in musketry, machine-gun, and bayonet; his brother, who took his place, is in the Life Guards, and a third brother now assists his father, Mr. Jesse Hawkings, in the work of safeguarding birds and eggs. Another of the Society's most trusted and experienced Watchers, it may be mentioned, had his house and furniture destroyed by one of the September Zeppelins.

Nevertheless, the record of the Watching for the spring and summer of 1916 is exceedingly satisfactory, in spite of drawbacks and difficulties, and in spite of unfavourable weather at a critical time, when cold and wet took toll of nests and young birds. Unseasonable conditions were especially trying in the far north, one of the Shetland

Watchers reporting it as the worst spring and summer in his recollection, with heavy snow in May and wet and fog right up to August. At a less distant spot on the coast, storms of wind interfered with the Terns, whose nests were so completely "blown up" with sand that the birds had to start afresh, some wisely moving from the shore to the adjoining heathy moor, where they "came on fine." It is perhaps too much to imagine that they will make first choice of the more sheltered region next spring! The Terns of another locality narrowly escaped a still greater danger. Almost up to the time of their arrival, cavalry from a neighbouring camp were doing patrol duty on the shore, and the nesting-ground was torn up by horses' hoofs; happily, man and horse departed just before the Sea-Swallows winged their way to their old breeding-place, and a thoroughly successful season ensued. The presence of young officers and men has naturally not been without peril to the birds. In one area it was found advisable to post special warning-notices, and off one or two northern islands the crews of patrol vessels gave trouble. But no actual depredations have to be laid to the door of men in either Navy or Army; and on the other hand, some of the soldiers coming in contact with Watchers have shown keen interest in the measures taken

by the Society for preserving Britain's rare birds, and letters of enquiry have been received from previous visitors who are now standing high in the Service. The absence, in uniform, of young men of the villages has perhaps been no bad thing for the birds; and coast regions on which the collector casts longing eyes have been rendered inaccessible to the public.

Of the rare and interesting species for whose benefit the Watchers' Fund is especially organised, particularly good news has come in of Terns, Kentish Plovers, Shelducks, Phalaropes, Choughs, Ravens, and Great Skuas. The nesting of the Kentish Plover at Dungeness was delayed by the weather, but by July there were more birds than for years past; while the Norfolk Plovers, and sea-birds and waders generally, brought off good broods. On Brean Down, their chief breeding-place in England, the Shelducks grow more numerous. Seeing that one pair are reported to have hatched out twenty-two eggs, this will hardly be wondered at; but it is noted that, while the colony at the Down increases, that on the neighbouring Warren seems to decrease and is now a very small one, indicating that the birds have discovered where they are safest. Coast Watchers support the statement of the R.S.P.B. Watchers as to the steady increase of the Cornish Choughs; they have become "quite plentiful to what they used to be" on the grand Tintagel rocks, where Peregrines and Buzzards have also done well; and as for Owls, writes the Watcher, "I never knew so many about, they perch on our window-sills and nest quite near the house." In the Orkney area, "Phalaropes seem increasing in numbers every season, and a great many different kinds of birds hatched off, all seem getting more plentiful." The news of the Phalaropes is especially

welcome, as these charming birds, Ruskin's "Arctic fairies," are far too few in number. From several stations in Shetland the tenour of the reports is similar. In the words of one Watcher, "No eggs have been taken this season; the young men are away to the war, and for the young lads and boys I soon put them away. The Fulmar and all the others are doing well. I have never seen the like of what the birds is in . . . this season."

Ravens and Buzzards have in most cases reared their young without let or hindrance. In one instance a pair of Buzzards took possession of a Raven's old nest, evidently after a fight for possession. In the Shetlands the cold proved very trying for Golden Plovers, Ring-Plovers, and Wheatears, and the Divers lost a large proportion of their eggs, which were taken by some winged or four-footed marauder.

It has already been mentioned in *Bird Notes and News* that the Gannet has this year nested for the first time at Noss. At least three pairs hatched out young. The Little Owl, an alien which is continually extending its range, has made a first appearance on Brean Down. On one of the Cumberland lakes the Redshank, unknown there before, has brought up a family. The Great Skua has also spread to a new district.

Other species benefiting by the Watchers' care include Harrier, Merlin, Heron, Green and other Plovers, Eider Duck, Wigeon, Pintail, Shoveller, and other Ducks, and a variety of others, including many commoner but not necessarily less delightful birds that nest on and about the Watched areas.

Undoubtedly the success which has attended the work of the Watchers' Committee results from the great care taken in the appointment of Watchers, and the good fortune the Society has had in retaining the

services of men not only thoroughly trustworthy and honourable, but keenly interested in the welfare of the birds and personally as anxious as the Committee to ensure their safety. The visits of members of the Committee are looked forward to and valued as opportunities to show something of what has been done and to demonstrate the good results of vigilance. Whether on the stony beach of Dungeness or the coloured sands of Alum Bay; by the white cliffs of Albion at Beachy Head or the towering heights of King Arthur's Castle in Cornwall, or the mountains and moors of the Lake country; far away among the mists of Britain's outposts in the wild Atlantic, or on the last of the Mendip spurs that looks across from Somerset to Newfoundland; as far west as the shores of Anglesey, or as far east as the Aberdeenshire coast, the Watchers have worked with one mind for the preservation of the Birds and in loyal support of the Society's efforts.

It is earnestly hoped that not one of these Watchers will have to be told that his services must be dispensed with because funds are no longer forthcoming. It is true that even if unpaid many of them would continue to do their best. "You can depend upon it that I will look after the birds as long as I am alive and am able," writes one. "After so many years it would be a great pity if this good work should fall through," says another; "I shall always feel it my duty to do something for the birds." But this very readiness will in itself appeal for a continuance of the work without interruption. It is of course only part-time work in a part of the year. Keeper or boatman, or fisherman, or shepherd, or quarryman, or whatever their daily occupation, they are ineligible for military service, and have in several cases suffered seriously

through loss of employment because of the War, which has kept away tourists, closed quarries, and jeopardised fishing.

It is a point to be remembered also that the protection of rare birds is not a thing that can be laid down and subsequently picked up at the same point. Remove the guard, and their numbers will again decline, possibly beyond recovery; for all are contending against unfavourable conditions, and the collector (the chiefest of these "conditions") is ready to step in wherever a breach is left.

One or two stories from the Watching-grounds have been told to subscribers to the R.S.B.P., and they may like to add another line to these bird-biographies. An account of the Ravens of the Isle of Wight was given at the Society's Annual Meeting. They have bred this year in the historic old haunt of their kind at Freshwater, and the male bird became so tame that while the hen was on her nest he would come to the Watcher for food. The history of the last of the White-tailed Eagles of Shetland has also been given—how the male bird was killed some years ago, and the old female has returned year in, year out, to the old nest each spring, to gaze out over the wide horizon, and wait. In the spring of 1916 she was still alive and at her post, "just hanging about the old place as usual," solitary for the rest of her days. Known friends again are the Richardson Skuas that would come about the hut of a Watcher in the northern "land's-end," to be fed. This year the same pair were back in May, "and as soon as they saw the door of the hut open they came up for their usual food."

There can be little doubt that the Watching, in addition to preservation of disappearing species, does much to promote that feeling for Bird-life at which all Bird

Protection aims. While the consciousness of a Watcher's presence has a wholesome effect on possible raiders, so the knowledge of this care for wild birds raises the status of birds in the minds of many persons, and engenders a new thought on the matter and a new interest. One of the Watchers tells a pretty anecdote of one of his visitors: "I took a

young lady on . . . Rock about a fortnight ago, and she was delighted with the young Sea-gulls. She took several up in her hand and kissed them." It may be at least surmised that this young lady will not deck her hat with bodies or wings of murdered Gulls or with the "osprey" plumes that tell of starving baby-Egrets.

Amount paid to Watchers, 1916, £189 17s. 6d.; amount received, subscriptions to Watchers' Fund, Jan. 1 to Oct. 1, 1916, £86 8s. 6d.; deficit on this year's expenditure, £103 9s. 0d.

Birds in the War Area.

ON THE WESTERN FRONT.

THE majority of communications which come from the War Area continue to lay stress on the indifference with which Birds appear to regard the hideous fury and destruction of war. Mr. H. Thoburn Clarke, writing in *Country Life* (Oct. 7th, 1916), tells especially of the *insouciance* of the Swallows, twittering and circling in and among ruined houses and barns and building in the cornices of what once were dainty drawing-rooms.

"The Swallows built several nests on the rafter of a big outhouse which we used as a harness-room. The nests were only just above our heads, but the Swallows slipped behind the rafters and constructed their nests and laid their eggs quite unheeding our presence.

"Once the Germans shelled our position for an hour and a half. We retreated to some cellars which had been sandbagged and waited there until the bombardment stopped. The place was struck several times, and one shell dropped into the cellars, but failed to explode and did no damage to anyone. When the "strafig" was all over we found that one shot had taken off the greater part of the stable roof, the second had hit the end of the outhouse and demolished part of the wall. The Swallows apparently did not care, for they were not in the least perturbed by the noise of the shelling, and continued feeding their young ones as if nothing had happened. Before

the day was over they were using the shell hole as a convenient entrance through which to pass backwards and forwards with food for their young.

"At one of our stopping-places a pair of Swallows calmly appropriated the rack on which we hung our jackets. Needless to say, we resigned the rack to them and hung our uniforms upon a hastily improvised rack consisting of a board with some large nails driven into it. Unfortunately we were ordered off on our travels before the nest was completed, and never knew how the birds fared in their home-making."

Mr. Thoburn Clarke refers to the vast quantities of insects swarming on the battlefield; and this is a matter which has already impressed both ornithologists and agriculturists with the desperate need France will have for her insectivorous birds after the war. It may fairly be assumed that no more hecatombs of Swallows will be permitted in the Camargue, to fill the pockets of the feather-traders at the expense of the food of the people.

Equally invaluable with the insect-eaters are the Owls and Kestrels. To these allusion is made in a paper on "Birds on the Western Front," contributed to the *Weekly Westminster* (Oct. 14th, 1916), by "Saki" (the late Lance-Sergeant Hector Monro).

"Rats and mice have mobilised and swarmed into the fighting line, and there has been a partial mobilisation of Owls, particularly Barn Owls, following in the wake of the mice and making laudable efforts to thin out their numbers. . . . The Buzzard, that earnest seeker after mice, does not seem to be taking any war risks, at least I have never seen one out here, but Kestrels hover about all day in the hottest parts of the line, not in the least disconcerted apparently when a promising mouse-area suddenly rises in the air in a cascade of black or yellow earth. Sparrow-Hawks are fairly numerous, and a mile or two back from the firing line I saw a pair of Hawks that I took to be Red-legged Falcons circling over the tops of an oak copse.

"The English gamekeeper, whose knowledge of wild life usually runs on limited and perverted lines, has evolved a sort of religion as to the nervous debility of even the hardiest game birds; according to his beliefs a terrier trotting across a field in which a Partridge is nesting, or a mouse-hawking Kestrel hovering over the hedge, is sufficient cause to drive the distracted bird off its eggs and send it whirring into the next county.

"The Partridge of the war zone shows no signs of such sensitive nerves. The rattle and rumble of transport, the constant coming and going of bodies of troops, the incessant rattle of musketry and deafening explosions of artillery, the night-long flare and flicker of star-shells, have not sufficed to scare the local birds away from their chosen feeding grounds, and to all appearances they have not been deterred from raising their broods. Gamekeepers who are serving with the colours might seize the opportunity to indulge in a little useful nature study."

Perhaps the most extraordinary instance of bird-intrepidity, however, is that recounted elsewhere by another correspondent, of a Hawk tackling a bomb in mid-air. What sort of weird bird he took the thing for none can say; but happily he got clear before it exploded.

THE CHAFFINCH THAT STAYED.

The most touching of Mr. Monro's stories is about a Chaffinch—

"At the corner of a stricken wood (which has had a name made for it in history, but shall be nameless here), at a moment when lyddite and shrapnel and machine-gun fire swept and raked and bespattered that devoted spot as though the artillery of an entire Division had suddenly concentrated on it, a wee hen Chaffinch flitted wistfully to and fro, amid splintered and falling branches that had never a green bough left on them. The wounded lying there, if any of them noticed the small bird, may well have wondered why anything having wings and no pressing reason for remaining should have chosen to stay in such a place. There was a battered orchard alongside the stricken wood, and the probable explanation of the bird's presence was that it had a nest of young ones whom it was too scared to feed, too loyal to desert. Later on, a small flock of Chaffinches blundered into the wood, which they were doubtless in the habit of using as a highway to their feeding-grounds; unlike the solitary hen-bird, they made no secret of their desire to get away as fast as their dazed wits would let them."

* * *

AN officer in the French Flying Corps, who may be identified with a valued fellow-worker of the R.S.P.B., has taken advantage of exceptional opportunities to record observations on the flight of birds and the height at which they fly, especially when migrating. Some of his notes are published in the *Pall Mall Gazette* (Nov. 11th, 1916). Swallows, he says,

"Seem to prefer an altitude of 2,000 ft., whereas Wild Duck fly usually at fully 5,000 ft. They are remarkable, also, for the marvellous uniformity with which they follow their leader. The turns and twists are taken with such simultaneity that a flock appears to turn and wheel automatically, so extraordinarily together do they move. When climbing they fly at about sixty-five miles an hour, and are good for seventy once they have got their height and have spread out to let themselves go.

"Last March he met some Plovers at 6,500 ft., which is the highest at which he has seen a company of birds."

BIRD NOTES FROM MACEDONIA.

AN officer of the R.A.M.C. sends some notes on the birds of Macedonia to the *Hospital* (Dec. 12th, 1916) :

Bird-life on the Macedonian hills and plains is very various. The Kestrel is bound to attract the attention of any traveller, for this beautiful little Hawk is plentiful and exceedingly confiding. It is a common sight to see six or eight of them hovering in a group over some reach of stubble. Seen closely, as they are here, the beauty of their plumage and the grace with which they sweep and glide across the wind are very charming. I believe they chiefly feed on grasshoppers.

"In the ravines that cut across the country and have in them water and a lush growth of rushes, scrub, and willow-herb, and also in the marshy ground down by the lakes and rivers, a brown Hawk, large, rather ragged-looking, and floppy of flight, is common. It rises in front of my horse as it pushes through the tangle of marsh growth, and flops away slowly close to the tops of the reeds. I believe it to be the Marsh Harrier, a bird once common in the English fens. Kites, Vultures, and a nearly white scavenger with

a yellow beak, common in India, all are plentiful.

"The number and variety of the Crow tribe is very astonishing. Magpies are everywhere, often in flocks of twenty or thirty; Jackdaws in huge flocks like Rooks in England. Rooks do not exist here so far as I know. There are great numbers of the Hooded Crow, many Carrion Crows, and a goodly number of Ravens. A very common bird is the Roller, often called the Blue Jay on account of a superficial resemblance to that bird. It is a solitary and insectivorous bird of dull appearance as it sits motionless on some low bush, but when it opens its wings in flight it reveals a surprising and beautiful display of bright blue feathers. From a point of vantage, such as a bush or telegraph wire, it dashes suddenly down to catch its insect prey.

"The Hoopoe is very plentiful, but much less confiding than in India.

"Storks are very plentiful. They have huge nests on the houses or in tall trees. When I arrived in Macedonia the young had left the nests, but the parent pairs have not deserted their homes, for often a pair may be seen standing solemnly and still, side by side, as if ruminating on the fate of the offspring that had forsaken it."

Economic Ornithology.

THE WINDHOVER.

BY THE HON. GLADYS GRAHAM MURRAY.

THE little Kestrel is the commonest of all Hawks and Falcons and is to be found all over Britain. To a certain extent the Kestrel is resident with us, but in the North of Scotland it migrates for the winter, whilst even in the South there is probably a good deal of interchanging among the birds, some crossing over to the Continent, whilst their place is taken by other birds who have come from more northerly districts.

In the bygone days of falconry the Kestrel was but little used on account of its sulky and indocile nature, but the Eastern falconers appear to have trained it with better success than their Western *confrères*.

The Kestrel appears as a master in the art of flight. To watch the bird poised in mid-air as though suspended on an invisible thread, as with vibrating wings and tail spread wide, it hangs 'twixt sky and earth, is to watch flight in its most beautiful aspect; the wings vibrate so rapidly as to appear motionless, then with a sudden plunge it drops down in search of its quarry. The "Windhover" is an apt nickname for this "lord of the air." When in quest of its food the bird quarters the ground in a systematic fashion. With a free and powerful flight it circles around in wide sweeps, now soaring, now winging ahead through the azure blue, and then suddenly closing its wings and tail and dropping to earth. When actually hunting

its game the Kestrel usually keeps to about fifty feet above the ground.

Like other members of the Accipitrine family, the Kestrel is no architect, and its nest may be the disused abode of some other bird, Crow or Ringdove perhaps, or some edge or fissure of a stony crag or cliff, or in the fastness of some wild highland glen. The eggs, four to six, usually laid in April or May, are of a pale reddish white, with markings of a dull brown-red colour, and in shape they are nearly circular.

It is a great mistake to look upon this little Falcon as destructive to other birds; this is not the case. It is true that here and there a certain Kestrel may develop a *penchant* for young pheasants, and that occasionally small birds are preyed upon, but their *menu* is chiefly composed of mice, field voles, and other small rodents, including grasshoppers and other insects.

It would be well for all farmers to realise what an ally they have in the Windhover, whose capacity for a diet of mice, etc., is very large. The undigested portions of their food are thrown up in castings as is the manner of all Falcons.

A pair of Kestrels hatched out their family in safety this year (1916) on the face of a crag overhanging a beautiful and wild valley in Perthshire. Their screeching cry could be heard throughout the day till late evening; whilst the birds, four in number, were constantly to be seen darting from out the rock and flying to and fro. A certain amount of family dissension seemed to take place, for the young birds were often to be seen fighting in mid-air. The hayfield in front of the rock was well quartered for food supply, the young birds greeting with lusty cries the return of their mother.

BIRDS IN THE FIELDS.

"I CROSSED a stubble field the other day, and was astonished at the number of birds that rose from it. There were hundreds of them of such common kinds as Sparrows, Chaffinches, Linnets, Redpolls, Hedge-sparrows, Greenfinches, and Yellowhammers. And yet the ground from which they rose seemed very unpromising. In summer time it had been a field of oats, and now nothing remained but the long rows of stubble with the brown earth between them. Here and there, where the crop had been laid and where it cut badly, were flattened-out masses of straw, but these places were not particularly sought out by the birds.

"But there was really no mystery about their activities. The black ground between the rows of stubble in any cornfield is heavily sprinkled with seed of the many different kinds of weeds that thrive among corn crops. Without exception these weeds are great seed producers. A single plant of some of them is capable of growing and scattering hundreds of thousands of them, and the least prolific produces in thousands, and will have done well by its kind if one of its thousands survives and yields a plant next year. All these seeds are earth-coloured. So to our eyes they are invisible. But to the eyes of the birds all those invisible seeds are visible, and they pick them up all through the short working day with hardly a pause. What kind of fields the farmers would have next summer if there were no birds to work on them for several months a year at weed-seed destruction may be conjectured. . . . Were they absent the surface layer would be turned over by the plough, with all its seeds upon it, to lie safely in waiting, and most of them have an astonishing power of biding their time. But during the months that the ground is exposed the birds work so effectually upon it that not one seed in a thousand survives the ordeal. The indiscriminate hatred of birds shown by some farmers is a misdirected emotion. With few exceptions the seed eaters, not less than the insect eaters, are their very good servants, and in the winter their whole life is devoted to the work of destroying the great robbers of the soil's fertility."—X. Y. Z. in the *Dundee Advertiser* (Nov. 11th, 1916).

The Royal Society for the Protection of Birds.

COUNCIL MEETINGS.

MEETINGS of the Council of the Society were held at the Middlesex Guildhall, S.W., on October 20th and December 8th, 1916, Mr. Montagu Sharpe, Chairman, presiding.

Hon. Secretary's Report.

The Hon. Secretary reported on October 20th the death of Mrs. Edward Phillips, one of the founders of the Society, Vice-President, and member of the Council, and of the Hon. Mrs. Boyle, one of its earliest supporters. On December 8th he had further to chronicle the sudden death of Captain Tailby, member of the Council. On the motion of the Chairman it was agreed that an expression of the deep regret of the Council for the heavy loss sustained by the Society be entered on the minutes in each case. The renewal of the Bird Protection Orders for East Sussex and Mayo and the issue of an Order for Kildare, were reported. Lectures had been given by the Rev. J. E. Kelsall (two), Mr. William Berry (two), Mr. H. Vicars Webb, and Miss Hamilton. The awards in the Bird-and-Tree Inter-County and County Challenge Shield Competitions were confirmed. Mr. Archibald Thorburn's gift of a picture for the Society's Greeting-card was acknowledged by a hearty vote of thanks. The Society's action in the matter of Mr. Chance and the taking of protected eggs; the dangerous use of air-guns; and the Bird Protection Law of Malta, was reported.

Finance and General Purposes Committee.

The accounts for the third quarter of 1916, and for October and November, respectively,

were presented, showing a considerable decrease on last year's totals; and it was reported that an intimation had been received of a legacy to the Society from the late Miss G. F. Packe, and of the residue of an estate, after the determination of certain life interests, under the will of the late Miss Mildred Bowers. The following Fellows and Members were elected:—

FELLOWS: Lord Desborough, K.C.V.O. (Bucks); C. H. Boyle (Weetwood); Miss Jacob (London, W.); J. Bell White (Gerrard's Cross); Mrs. Wilson (Bexhill); Mrs. Marke Wood (Deal).

MEMBERS: Captain R. O. Bridgeman (Hayward's Heath); Frank Burrell (Bury St. Edmunds); Chas. Carpenter (Newton Abbot); Rev. J. Easton, M.A. (Murston); W. E. Halstead (Bradford); Mrs. Hawkesworth (Watlington); J. Duncan Hodgson (Newcastle-on-Tyne); Miss E. F. Jones (Tunbridge-Wells); Mrs. Beauchamp Leggett (London, S.E.); Miss Alma Paton (Wimbledon); Miss A. M. Smith (Clifton); Miss Emily I. Smith (Clifton); C. E. Strickland (Newton Abbot); Miss Helen Sutherland (Newport, Fife); Miss Ethel Timins (Watford).

Watchers' Committee.

A report on the work done by the Society's Watchers in 1916 was presented. Attention was drawn to the record, in an ornithological journal, of the shooting of four Hobbies by a keeper in Leicestershire; and it was agreed that every effort should be made to induce County Councils and landowners to protect this rare and harmless bird. The suggested formation of a bird-sanctuary in Cornwall was reported; and some discussion took place with regard to the losses sustained by one of the Watchers in a Zeppelin raid.

General Business.

The arrangements for the Society's Annual Meeting and for Council Meetings in 1917 were discussed, and various questions relating to the trade in birds' feathers, the destruction of rare birds, the Society's nesting-box depot, and other subjects, were considered.

OBITUARY.

THE Society has sustained a heavy and grievous blow in the sudden death, on the 22nd October, of Captain T. M. J. Tailby, one of the most energetic and indefatigable members of the Council. A constant attendant at its meetings whenever it was possible to him, he was present at that of October 20th and full of keenest interest in the work done and that which lay in front. He left town the same night for his Leicestershire place, Skeffington Park, and appeared to be in his usual health on the following day, when he was actively superintending the planting of trees in his grounds. On Sunday morning he was taken suddenly ill whilst dressing, and died in a few minutes. He had been for some time under medical treatment, his bodily strength being unequal to his strenuous calls upon it.

A lover of birds from childhood, Captain Tailby's devotion to the cause of Bird Protection in all its phases amounted almost to a passion. Whether it was the preservation of rare species, the detection of the hated pole-trap, the defence of small birds from the catcher and dealer, or the abolition of the loathed plume-trade, his chivalrous and impulsive nature was instant in support of every effort. For Owls in particular he had a strong personal affection, an outcome of which was his offer annually of special prizes for essays on the utility and protection of Owls in connexion with the Public School

and the Bird and Tree Competitions. For years it may be mentioned, too, he regularly visited a captive Brown Owl in the aviary at Battersea Park, taking it tit-bits, and seeing to the improvement of its quarters. His sympathies in this respect and on behalf of the Hawks and Falcons sometimes brought him into collision with his brother-sportsmen, as he never allowed game-preservation to stand in the way of humanity to wild life. He had a horror of the cage-bird traffic, and contemplated the introduction into Parliament of a measure which he hoped might put a practical end to bird-catching. He joined the Council of the Society in 1906.

On the outbreak of war, Captain Tailby, as an officer in the 11th Hussars, offered his services to the War Office, and was engaged in the training of cavalry recruits at Aldershot, and later as transport officer. His only son, who is in the same regiment, is serving in France. He was 54 years of age.

SONG-BIRDS AS FOOD.

It will be remembered that the sale of song-birds as food in the provision department of a large West-end store last spring led to the asking of a question in the House of Commons, when the Home Secretary strongly deprecated the innovation. The firm in question undertook not to offend in future. A similar reply has now been received by the R.S.P.B. from Messrs. Whiteley, who also introduced Thrushes and Blackbirds into their provision stores, but who write, under date November 14th, 1916:—

"We have no desire to continue a practice that may be contrary to the wishes of the majority of the British public, and in the circumstances we have given instructions that, in future, Thrushes and Blackbirds are not to be sold in our establishment."

IMPORTATION OF LIVE BIRDS.

THE Board of Trade have, by a Proclamation dated October 3rd, prohibited the importation of all live birds into this country, with the exception of poultry and game. Bird protectors must see to it that lack of little foreign birds from other lands is not made the bird-catcher's and dealer's pretext for catching and caging additional British birds; these, as they can be studied in their wild state, are not called for by the scientific aviculturist.

BIRD PROTECTION IN MALTA.

A NEW Ordinance for the protection of the Wild Birds of Malta has been issued by the Governor, Field-Marshal Lord Methuen. It marks a great advance upon the Ordinance of 1911, giving fuller protection to species that are fast being exterminated on the island, and the thanks of Bird Protectors are due to Mr. Guiseppa Despott, of the Malta Natural History Museum, Captain Scott-Hopkins and Mr. Jessop, of the Garrison Batt., Yorkshire Regiment, and, above all, to Lord Methuen.

The Plumage Trade.

THOUGH the quantity of wild-bird plumage used in the making of artificial flies for the angler is not to be compared with the amount used for women's headgear, it furnishes a plea for the killing of certain species with brilliantly hued feathers, and affords an excuse for the importation of plumage from abroad. An article will appear in the Spring Number of *Bird Notes and News*, from the pen of Mr. W. Baden-Powell, K.C., showing, from practical experiments that the use of feathers is not necessary for salmon flies, but may now be superseded, to the advantage of the angler, by flies of different construction which form a more attractive lure.

A CARGO OF MAGPIES.

A curious illustration of the fact that while many useful imports are restricted to the uttermost, that of useless articles still goes on, is afforded by the fact that a large quantity of the skins and wings of Magpies were recently washed up at several points on the coast of England. The plumage had been prepared for the plumassier, and was no doubt on its way to the feather-market

when the vessel was wrecked or struck a mine and its cargo became the flotsam of the waves. The birds were the Asiatic type of Magpie.

HELP FOR DISABLED SOLDIERS.

A letter has been received by the Society from Mr. Hornaday, of the New York Zoological Park, in which an interesting suggestion is made for a millinery decoration which would be not only artistic in itself but might afford help to the dependents of men who have given their all for their country. He writes:—

"Some months ago I put forth an effort to induce the people of Paris to take up seriously the question of educating maimed soldiers, and also soldiers' widows and orphans, into making embroidery for millinery use. I think that in the first place there is a great field for hand embroidery on women's hats, and also that a great many maimed soldiers and soldiers' wives could be trained into what would be a new and profitable industry and means of livelihood. . . . I know that the idea is a good one, and in the proper hands can be made productive."

There is no reason why such an undertaking should not be started in London

as well as in Paris; and if a number of women of fashion who now devote their energies to selling bazaar inutilities and organizing concerts for war-funds were to promote a soldiers' industry, and at the same time make the use of embroidered millinery "smart," they might do some permanent service. A certain amount of embroidery is worn; and the question is not as to its beauty or elegance, or as to the possibility of teaching men—already successful in making dolls and toys—to produce it. The sole doubt is—Are women in too complete bondage to their milliners and the milliners to the feather-traders to take up a scheme which would help disabled heroes instead of swelling trade profits?

MILLINERY AND MUNITIONS.

In the early days of the war plumetraders in France appealed to the United States to relax the plumage prohibition law for the sake of "poor feather-workers" of Paris. It is interesting to learn from M. Edmond Perrier (writing in *Le Temps*) that the feather-workers have been essentially needed for making munitions. They will be equally necessary in all manner of factories after the war, both in England and France, when useful manufactures revive and manufacturers are placed on their mettle to supply the world's goods. No one can longer pretend that the old-time manipulator of "ospreys" and "mounts" will lack employment or prove unadaptable to it.

Bird-and-Tree Challenge Shield Competitions.

[Particulars of the Society's Bird-and-Tree (Arbor Day) Scheme, and of the Essay Competitions, open to all Elementary Schools, may be had from the Secretary, R.S.P.B., 23, Queen Anne's Gate, S.W.]

A REPORT on the working of the Bird-and-Tree Competition this year can hardly be better prefaced than by an extract from a circular letter sent by the Secretary of the Norfolk Education Committee to the School Teachers of Norfolk:—

"These are war times, and the schools have to a considerable extent been deprived of their older children, especially the boys. No doubt this accounts in great measure for the falling off in the competing teams in the Bird-and-Tree Scheme, teachers feeling that their Teams had no chance because of the absence of the elder children.

"The results prove this to be a mistake. The First and Second Teams [in Norfolk] were both composed of young children, only one over twelve years of age. This, therefore, is not a sufficient reason for omitting to raise a Team; and I hope the success of the young Teams will encourage Teachers to raise a Team for the present year (1916-7).

"There can be no question as to the educational value of the direct observation and of the resulting expression of ideas, both by writing and drawing, which the children engaged in the Bird-and-Tree Scheme are obliged to undertake. The effort is stimulating, and the results have a direct bearing upon the efficiency of the general work of the school."

Since the issue of this letter the young Team of Beechamwell, which took First Place in Norfolk, has been awarded the Inter-County Shield, the Second Place being assigned to Newburgh Team, representing the industrial county of Lancashire, and the Third to Bedworth Council School, working under wholly different conditions again, in Warwickshire.

One of the great charms of Bird-and-Tree work and results is their unexpectedness. It is impossible to say what class of school

stands best chance, or to forecast the winner of the coming year from the achievements of the present. Events depend not only on the teacher (powerful as is his or her influence and inspiration) but on the individual children; not on what is poured into the child's mind, but on what the young mind has been trained and encouraged to gather for itself. Large schools and small schools, young Teams and older ones, schools in remote villages and schools in populous towns, alternately come to the fore. There are schools with four or five hundred children on the books who enrol perhaps fifty "cadets" for the work, and schools which have enough to do to scrape together the necessary Team of nine. The neighbourhood of Wigan is scarcely one to suggest Nature Study; yet it produces several excellent Teams, including Lancashire's champion, and promising work comes from a district thus described by the Teacher:—

"The school is situated on the main road. We have only two field paths in the whole district, and although a wood is in sight it is not open to the public. Our land is so highly cultivated that the hedges are kept low and close-cut, so that even wild flowers are scarce. You will easily see that we can only study the ordinary common birds. We just have to do the best we can."

To plucky schools like this the ordinary common Birds should be left by the more fortunate boys and girls who can ramble through the meadows and by the streams of rural Hampshire, Somerset and Warwick. Yet in Warwick the mining districts do exceptionally well; while some of the most charming and bird-haunted regions of almost every competing county are unrepresented in the Competition. The familiar is the unappreciated and unheeded; possibly for the same reason the abundant Essays on

Robins and Thrushes are rarely so good as those on species which the young observer has had to seek with diligence and watch with difficulty.

To those acquainted with the limited range of bird-knowledge alike in town and country, among adults and children, it may be a surprise to learn that boys and girls have written for the Society's Competition original accounts of not less than a hundred species. The number of different Trees chosen has also been very large.

The comment of Mr. Cox, quoted above, as to the work of the younger children, is equally applicable to every county. There is often a charming freshness and simplicity about their writing which is missing in the more elaborate and self-conscious work natural to those in their 'teens, when the effort (often successful) to compose a well-written paper is apt to take away attention from the matter. A notable difference also is observable between boys and girls, generally speaking. The girls write the best compositions, express themselves best, and often show a very pretty grace of style. The boys slog away at the facts, display infinite patience in detail-work, and take keen interest in correlated matters, such as insect-life. The girl dwells on the dainty form and colouring of a bud; the boy cuts it open and counts the layers. The boy, it may be added, takes also an unholy joy in the bellicose tendencies of Birds, referring even courting displays to pugilistic encounters, and rarely writes on the Robin without serving up the old fable that every young Robin kills its father.

Both boys and girls show an intelligent appreciation of the value of Trees and of the various uses of their wood. More than one Team recounts and deplores the felling and

clearing of woods which has gone on of late, and points to the necessity for Tree-planting, not only to take the place of trees carted away for soldiers' huts and trenches, but also to afford the huge supply of timber which England now imports from abroad. Tree-planting on "Arbor Day" emphasises this in the children's minds.

With regard to the economic value of Birds, knowledge is much more halting, and some of the most valuable insectivorous species are set down as eating corn and fruit or merely as "not doing so much harm" or being "not such thieves" as the generality of birds. On the other hand, there are many schools in which a wiser spirit is carefully inculcated, and in which the children watch with perseverance the food taken by birds and count up with interest the number of times in which nestlings are fed. The observing habit is here at its most practical and useful development.

Extremes have, as usual, to be guarded against in Bird-and-Tree work. At one end is the nicely-rounded little composition with conventional facts derived from book or lesson. At the other the contents of a note-book, sometimes setting down most trivial events, transferred just as they stand to the essay sheets. All observation is good, and the reading of books is also good, but the essay should, if possible, be a summary of recollections and impressions, without recourse to notes for more than a date or a measurement. Some schools do excellently well without use of books at all. Lancashire is pre-eminent in this way.

There are also two extreme views of the Birds themselves. They may be watched as a mechanical toy is watched, without recognition of the little intelligence inside the coat of feathers; or they may be—and often are—credited with human knowledge

of good and evil, and described as "artful," "thievish," "cheeky," "conceited," "sly," and so on, as if schools and lessons and Ten Commandments were as familiar to them as to their youthful observers, and as though they knew it their duty to eat the slugs and leave the strawberries, to feast on charlock and refuse to look at corn!

The 1916 Competition is, on the whole, extremely satisfactory. In some counties the number of competing Teams has even increased, and where the standard reached is not equal to that of former years it is fully explained by the compulsory absence of Cadets with two or three years' experience of Bird-watching, or of teachers enthusiastic in the study. Double praise must be given to Teams, like those of Filgrave in Bucks and Atherton in Lancashire, who have "bucked up" to do credit to the absent master; to boys employed at shops after school hours, like those of Wickham in Hants, who have utilised early closing days for study; and to others, both boys and girls, who having left school for work in field or house during the year, have yet kept up their connexion with the Team and made it possible to rejoin for the Essay-writing.

There is still a strong tendency to devote wholly disproportionate space to nests and eggs and too little to the general habits and characteristics of birds. Winter walks, and also bird-feeding in winter, such as is practised notably at Bedworth, Princes Risboro', and Chillington, is a good corrective for this. Above all, Bird-language, songs and call-notes, are neglected to an extraordinary extent. It would appear that the ear develops much later than the eye. In the Tree papers the tendency is perhaps to overdo detail, and lose the Tree in minute

examination of its parts. The teaching of a few simple botanical terms is a great help to children in their descriptions, and an outline of the fertilisation of flowers makes it possible to understand the mystery of catkins and the relation of flower to fruit. A little study of seedlings and their development is also valuable.

Many of the essays bear, as usual, really remarkable testimony to the quick observation, the patience, and the active intelligence of boys and girls ranging in age from seven to (in highly exceptional cases) 14. The average age this year is about 11. Beyond keen and persevering outdoor study there is manifest not a little thought and reasoning power; and the multitude of pretty and

interesting stories told of individual Birds bear pleasant testimony to the happy feeling for the feathered folk which the Society desires to instil. Writing and spelling are excellent as a whole, and special mention must be made of the admirable drawings from nature which form a feature of many of the papers. A special prize for artistic work is awarded to John Hollingworth, of Bedworth, by Mrs. Fuller Maitland.

The Prizes for best papers on Owls go to Tom Larcombe (Chillington) and Doris Gregson (Heskin.)

The Judges were: Mr. Montagu Sharpe, Rev. J. G. Tuck, Mr. Hudson, Mr. Hastings Lees, Mr. Masefield, Mrs. Fuller Maitland, Miss Clifton, and Miss Gardiner.

INTER-COUNTY SHIELD.

Winners of all the County Shields are eligible for this premier trophy, and it goes this year to Beechamwell C.E. School (Norfolk), whose work shows a remarkable amount of delightfully fresh and genuine observation of nature. The birds are Night-jar, Green Woodpecker, and Wagtail; the trees, Sallow, Wych Elm, and Lime.

The Second Place is taken by Newburgh

C.E. School (Lancashire) for admirably close, thoughtful, and interesting studies of Snipe, Lapwing, and Yellowhammer, Sweet Chestnut, Beech, and Oak. The Snipe Essay is individually one of the very best sent in this year. The Third Place is assigned to Leicester Road Council School, Bedworth (Warwickshire), with whom may be bracketed the Frome girls (Somerset).

COUNTY COMPETITIONS.

BUCKINGHAMSHIRE.—*Challenge Shield*: Prince's Risboro' C.E. School. Papers full of intelligence and sincerity, describing prettily, Wagtail, Yellowhammer and Starling, Acacia, Larch and Lime. The Team included a young Belgian refugee, who eighteen months ago did not know a word of English, and now writes it as well as most English boys of his age. Coleshill, Ellesborough, and Tyringham-cum-Filgrave gain *Certificates of Excellence*, and special Commendation is also given to Penn and Pitstone. A pleasant ingenuousness and freshness, with considerable grace of style, is characteristic of Bucks Essays in general.

CUMBERLAND.—*Challenge Shield*: Buttermere. This is probably the very smallest School in the year's list, but the papers are

charming, and were written without notes. They are also uncommonly well illustrated. The subjects are Dipper, Hedge-Sparrow, and Robin, Elm, Crab Apple, and Oak. The *Excellent* award is won by St. John's Girls, Keswick (3 teams), and Kirkoswald, and the *h.c.* by Cargo and Nether Denton. Cumberland Teams distinguish themselves, as usual, by a good and varied list of Birds (Keswick has Sedge-Warbler, Corncrake, and Chiff-chaff) and by originality of observation.

HAMPSHIRE.—*Challenge Shield*: Barton Stacey. This is an unexpected triumph to those who have not watched the steady progress of this village school, but well-deserved by genuine, simple, and prettily written papers on Swallow, Greenfinch, and Wren (with good note of its song), White-

beam, Cedar, and Sycamore. *Certificates* are awarded for much admirable work from Bournemouth (St. Peter's Girls), Botley, Christchurch (St. Joseph's R.C.), Headley (Holme School), Ridge, and Southampton (Boys' Western). *H.c.*, Hinton Ampner, Wickham; *c.*, Hayling, Southampton (Foundry Lane Boys') and Swanmore. Hampshire shows excellent variety of subjects, composition is remarkably good, and the personal note pleasantly conspicuous.

LANCASHIRE.—*Challenge Shield*: Newburgh C.E. School (Second year). Work, already mentioned, done without notes and very well illustrated. The *Excellent* standard is reached by Withnell (United Methodist), Atherton (C.E.), and Preston (St. Stephen's); and good work comes also from Heskin (Pemberton's), Barton Newsham (R.C.), and Parbold Douglas; and by Brathay District C.E., Bolton-le-Sands, Brow Edge, Mawdesley (R.C.), and Scarisbrick Township. Thoroughness, intelligence, and grip are the outstanding merits of Lancashire's Essays.

NORFOLK.—*Challenge Shield*: Beechamwell C.E. School. These capital Essays take the Inter-County Shield also. Close behind come Wereham and Great Dunham (Girls); and *Certificates* go also to Loddon (Girls), Mertom and Bristom, Postwick, East Ruston, Tittleshall, and Wickmere. The number of competing Schools is down this year, but the work improves. It is markedly first-hand work, that on Birds devoted too narrowly to the breeding-time.

NORTHAMPTONSHIRE.—*Challenge Shield*: Harlestone C.E. School. Very genuine and careful essays on Wagtail, House-Martin, and Linnet, Holly, Hornbeam, and Horse-Chestnut; 2, Badby; 3, Cold Higham. *Certificates* to Clopton, Croughton, Culworth (D'Anvers School), Middleton Cheney, Wellingborough (All Saints', Girls), Welton. Almost all the matter in the Northants papers is entirely original, from first-hand notes, but form and composition are lacking.

SOMERSET.—*Challenge Shield*: Frome Girls' Council School. Bright, pleasant, and observant papers on Swallow, Lapwing, and Wren, White Poplar, Sycamore, and Larch, with artistic drawings. Close behind come North Perrott and Chillington; *h.c.*, Chedington, Horton, Milverton Girls, Wambrook, and Winham; *c.*, Norton Fitzwarren, Lamyatt. Teams are younger than in most

counties, the average age in Chedington being under 10, but the papers show the freshness of treatment and pretty graceful writing characteristic of the county.

WARWICK.—*Challenge Shield*: Leicester Road Council School, Bedworth. Evidencing a real love of Birds and Trees, these personal and sympathetic papers are charming to read, and the admirable drawings are among the best sent in from any county; the Birds are Chaffinch, Thrush, and Blue Tit; Trees, Larch, Acacia, and Beech. Mancetter C.E., Dosthill, and Minworth win *Certificates*; *h.c.*, Ansley, Solihull Girls, Stratford-on-Avon Girls, Temple Grafton; *c.*, Great Alne, Binton. There is notable individuality and sincerity about Warwickshire work, and it maintains its high standard well this year.

OPEN CLASS.—First, tie, Hinton Waldrist (Berks) and Totley (Derbyshire). Berkshire's young Team keeps its lead in the Class and writes pleasant essays on attractive subjects. The Totley papers are a curious *olla podrida*, frank and intelligent. *Certificates*, Felixstowe Ferry (Suffolk), Slindon (Sussex); *h.c.*, Bouverie-Pusey School, Charney (Berks), Holt C.E. (Wiltshire), Norton Bradway (Derbyshire).

An unusually large number of Festivals have been held during the dark days of December.

The presentation of the County and Inter-County Festivals at Beechamwell on Dec. 15th, was made also the occasion of a farewell gathering in honour of Mrs. Clarke, the Head Teacher of the School, to whose work high testimony was borne, and who was Mistress of Stoke Ferry when that school took the Shield in 1913-14. The Bedworth Picture Palace was the scene of a strong muster of children and their friends, five or six hundred in number, when the Warwickshire Shield was presented on Nov. 29th. Princes Risboro' had a thoroughly successful celebration on Dec. 8th, in honour of the Bucks Shield; the children gave entertainments afternoon and evening, including a capital performance of "The Enchanted Wood," and realised £3 for patriotic funds. The Somerset Shield was presented at Frome on Dec. 5th by Mrs. A. E. Lawrence, Captain Batten-Pooll, V.C., having unfortunately to rejoin a day or two previously.

IN THE COURTS.

SHOOTING A BITTERN.—At *Thirsk*, on December 5th, Enoch Kitching was fined the full penalty of £1 and costs for shooting a fine male Bittern in Otterington Willow Garth, near Northallerton. The bird is protected throughout the year in Yorkshire. The R.S.P.B. asked for forfeiture of the bird, which had been sent to a taxidermist in York; it was, however, stated that it had been given by the offender to a lady who had incurred some expense in having it stuffed; and though possession is equally illegal with killing, the Bench decided, in place of fining her, to return her the specimen.

BIRD-CATCHING.—The amount of bird-catching carried on in the Essex marsh district has long given trouble to the Society. As a result of the look-out kept by the police to prevent the shooting of military pigeons, some of the catchers also have happily been dropped upon. At *West Ham*, on November 3rd, Harry Sparkes, coal-porter, was fined £5 for torturing decoy birds, using nets, and having seventeen scheduled birds in his possession on Beckton Marshes. His nets and birds were confiscated. At the same Court, on October 30th, George Thomas Willis was fined £5 and his apparatus confiscated, for having newly-caught Chaffinches and Linnets in his possession. He was described as a professional bird-catcher, and one of his decoys had a stick thrust through it.

SHOOTING A GULL.—At *Southampton*, on October 13th, Alfred C. Hughes, of Warsash, was fined 7s. 6d. for shooting a Sea-Gull at Hamble. He said he did not know Gulls were protected, as in Cornwall they were told to shoot them. (This case resulted from the action of a lady member of the Society, consequent on the wanton shooting of Gulls on the shore.)

SUNDAY "GAME."—At *Romford* on Dec. 7, Ernest William Jones, of Manor Park, was summoned for taking a Thrush at Hornchurch on Sunday, Nov. 26th, and for being unlawfully in search of game. Defendant had a double-barrelled gun in his possession, was seen to fire at a spot where a covey of Partridges had previously been noted, and when searched had a newly-shot Thrush in his pocket. He said he was in search of Peewits and must get a bit of sport somehow.

The police said Defendant had been fined for carrying a loaded gun in a railway carriage and had become a perfect nuisance in the district by shooting on farms without permission Sunday after Sunday. He was ordered to pay 20s., his gun to be forfeited and sold for the benefit of the county.

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Printed by WITHERBY & Co., 326, High Holborn, W.C., and published by the ROYAL SOCIETY FOR THE PROTECTION OF BIRDS, 23, Queen Anne's Gate, S.W.

Bird Notes & News

ISSUED QUARTERLY BY THE ROYAL SOCIETY
:: FOR THE PROTECTION OF BIRDS ::

Vol VII.]

SPRING, 1917.

[No. 5.]

Food-Crops and Birds.

"It cannot be too widely known at the present time that any general or indiscriminate destruction of Wild Birds would be fraught with grave danger to the Food of the People.

"In every country and every district where Birds have been systematically destroyed, the result has been the same: (1) insect and vermin plagues, (2) serious losses to crops of all kinds, (3) failure of man to deal with the plagues, (4) efforts to bring back the Birds."—*Birds, Insects, and Crops.*

The startling ignorance manifested of late by many persons concerning the habits and character of even the commonest Wild Birds, arises, no doubt, out of that policy of culpable indolence and *laissez faire* which was before the War sapping the strength of the British nation and which led to its unpreparedness for the struggle in which it is now engaged. Educationalists, spending their millions a year, Boards and Chambers of Agriculture, with ample staffs and ample means, have alike done next to nothing to teach the people of the country the economic position of the Wild Bird, and its place and work in the scheme of Nature.

The result to-day is that the food-crops on which the nation so largely depends are more or less at the mercy of persons whose plentiful lack of knowledge is bolstered up by panic, and whose good intentions towards their fellows are quickening the very catastrophe they imagine they are warding off. "Kill the birds" is shrieked in the papers

by correspondents possessed of no shred of ornithological or entomological information, but who have seen or heard that "birds" eat fish or corn or fruit. "Start a 'sparrow'-club" is the cry of the village publican or smallholder, who supposes that the popular way to deal with a difficult problem is to send children out into the fields and lanes to destroy every nest, bird, and egg of the invaluable insect-eating species they find there.

Thus the way is being prepared for insect plagues and devastations to smother the land and to devour every green thing.

The Royal Society for the Protection of Birds has prepared a special Leaflet, "Birds, Insects, and Crops," to deal with this question, and asks the help of all interested, not only in the protection of Birds, but in the protection of Food-crops, in its circulation. It is hoped that this Leaflet will be put into the hands of workers on the land throughout the country, and be brought to the notice of all Agricultural War Committees, members of County and Parish Councils, School-teachers, and clergy. It is further hoped that sympathisers in this work will assist with special donations towards the cost, extra heavy at this time, of printing and circulating the many thousand copies which will be needed if the desired end is to be obtained.

Economic Ornithology.

THE SKYLARK.

REMARKING on the recent disposition of agricultural theorists to condemn the Skylark as destructive to corn-crops, a Fellow of the Society writes :

"I have interviewed a game-dealer this morning, and he informs me that he has examined the insides of thousands of Larks, and has never found a single grain of wheat, or of any corn, nor the remains of any young blade of corn; the food in the crops consisted of insects and weed-seeds. If farmers kill Larks, why do they not examine the contents of their crops?"

"The International Review of Agriculture," it may be added, refers to the Skylark as "distinctly beneficial"; Professor Newstead, in his "Food of British Birds" Supplement to the *Journal of the Board of Agriculture* (1908), includes it among species which are "occasionally injurious but with the balance of utility largely in their favour;" and Mr. Hammond, of the Cambridge School of Agriculture, sums up its character as "on the whole, beneficial" (*Journal of Agricultural Science*, 1912).

FRANCE AND HER BIRDS.

BY M^{LLE}. R. DE LA RIVE.

M. ANDRE GODART'S book "Les Jardins Volières," marks a noteworthy development in Bird-Protection in France. It is familiar knowledge that a strong Bird-Protection party, composed of men of every circle and class, statesmen, writers, sportsmen, teachers, agriculturists, has been growing up in France during the last twenty years or more, anxious not only to save but to rescue agriculture from the dangers by which it is threatened. It is not an easy task, owing to the freedom left to Prefects and Departments. Electoral interests are thus brought brought in, resulting in illegal shooting in close-time, in the merciless destruction of small songsters in Provence by the gunner, and of migrants netted in Languedoc, and in the killing of seabirds for a summer pastime by visitors to the coasts of Brittany and Normandy.

M. Godart, who writes with a burning indignation that often reminds his readers of Ruskin, first learned to love birds in his youth in the old city of Angers and in the Angevin marshes, and can look back with bitter regret to the days when Spoonbill, Avocet, Ruff, Woodcock, Heron, Plover, and Stilt were plentiful on river and lake. Many species then existing are now only names: migratory birds come in lessening numbers, and in times before the war men went out with guns from Toulon and Fréjus to shoot the flocks of small birds that were driven by stress of weather from the Alps. Is it surprising that Swallows, Flycatchers, and Nightjars, the natural protectors of man and beast from flies and mosquitoes, can no longer fulfil their mission; that the Ortolan and Wheatear, which played an important part in cleansing the French vineyards from insect pests, are rarely to be met with; and that 40 millions of francs were lost by grape-growers of the Gironde in 1910 through the ravages of larvæ?

The useful and interesting Owl, which deserves grateful protection at the hands of the corn-grower, is still persecuted, and the result is to be seen in the alarming increase of rats and voles. French forests, too, have lost greatly in value through the decrease in Woodpeckers, Tits, and other birds whose sharp beaks saved thousands of trees from insect sappers. The olive-growers of the south complain bitterly of the decrease of the oil-produce of their trees, and talk of giving them up altogether. The fault lies in the growers themselves, who shoot the Warblers and Thrushes hard at work in the olive-garden.

All this is melancholy reading, but the state of things can and must be coped with by the spirit of energy and discipline that the war has awakened in France.

M. Godart believes more in individual effort and the work of bodies of men interested in Bird-Protection and free to act and to enforce the laws, than in Government regulations. The best work done so far has been that of societies. The St. Hubert Club has grouped the real sportsmen in the interests of game-preservation; the Société Centrale des Chasseurs has demanded and

obtained penalties for the killing and selling of insectivorous birds, and the Société des Agriculteurs de France held in 1914 a congress to stimulate their protection. But it is to the Ligue Française pour la Protection des Oiseaux, that France owes the most valiant efforts on behalf of birds at home and in her colonies. Its work in the schools, interrupted by the war, has been most successful, and its publications have done much to awaken intelligent interest. But France cannot wait for children Bird-Protectors to grow up. Something immediate must be done; the State must join hands with the societies, reinforce the village police, prohibit the sale of nets and traps, and exact heavy fines for the killing of useful birds, the list of which ought to be considerably extended. The country could at the same time be re-stocked with real game by a union of sportsmen.

M. Godart's proposal, which gives its name to his book, is more especially for the rearing of interesting and beautiful species now practically extinct. His suggestion is that broods should be artificially reared in vast aviaries, and released when full-grown to people the now deserted woods and fields. He goes into all the details for carrying out such a scheme. Each enclosure must cover not less than 25 square metres of ground, be surrounded by walls at least 3 metres high, and roofed over by fine wire netting. Nature must be copied as faithfully as possible; bushes planted against the walls, in which holes and crannies have been made, a stream wander through the reserve, suitable vegetation provided; and many pages are devoted to tables of food for each species, including some forms of animal food to take the place of the insects and grubs on which the young are fed in a natural state. Birds such as Goldfinch, Bullfinch, Linnet, Yellowhammer, Thrush, Blackbird, and Starling, will nest readily in a garden aviary. But in the case of Woodpeckers, Waders, and gallinaceous birds, recourse must be had to the incubator and rearing by hand. M. Godart believes that this plan, successfully adopted for Warblers, Wrens, Rails, etc., would answer also for the Flamingoes, of which a few representatives still survive in Camargue, and for many migratory species.

The birds born and bred in the garden aviary are to be released in January of the following year, having previously learnt to

pick up their natural food. Their survival would have to be ensured in the district to be re-stocked by the planting of thickets (indispensable in a hedgeless country), surrounded if necessary by barbed wire to keep off two-footed and four-footed enemies. By such means M. Godart believes that species now migratory might become resident, such as Wild Duck and Bustard, and, if carefully housed and fed in winter, the Corncrake.

Entomologists dwell on the value of insects that prey on others, as allies of farmer and gardener; but many of the most harmful insects are not thus destroyed. As for the much cried-up chemicals they have proved inefficient or insufficient again and again. Let there be, says M. Godart, on a property of 100 hectares (about 250 acres), a vigilant body of eight to ten Owls, 100 Wheatears, Ortolans, and Pipits, 30 Blackbirds and Thrushes, 10 Rooks, 20 Starlings, as many Nuthatches and Woodpeckers, 100 Linnets and Goldfinches, as many Warblers, Wag-tails, and Tits, 30 Nightjars, Swallows, and Flycatchers, and there will be no more talk of the hopeless state of agriculture.

M. Edmond Perrière of the Institute of France, reviewing M. Godard's book in *Le Temps* (September 28th, 1916) quotes striking accounts of the ravages wrought by insects, and of the work done by birds in keeping down various pests:

"The nocturnal birds of prey destroy a great quantity of mice and rats. In the vast plain of the Beauce there is no cover for them, and that is why the Beauce is periodically invaded by field-mice, who are worse for her than locusts for the East. In 1876, M. de La Sicotière valued at a thousand millions (francs) the annual losses that these rodents cause to French agriculture.

"All the little passerine birds are of incontestable utility. People describe them, *grosso modo*, as graminivorous and insectivorous. As the former are accused of eating useful grain this is made a pretext for destroying them. That excuse once admitted, the others are destroyed also. This is a double mistake. The graminivorous feed their young with insects only, and they themselves eat a certain quantity

of insects all their lives. Who has not seen the common Sparrow chasing the butterflies in Paris? As to the insect-eaters they live on insects and eat a prodigious quantity. A Tit will consume one and a half times his own weight in a day, and other insectivores are almost as voracious."

BIRD-LIFE AT ASTON ROWANT.

THE following interesting account of the birds of Aston Rowant Gardens (Oxon.), valuable as the opinion of a practical horticulturist, comes from Mr. G. Abbey, who also sends a list of resident, migrant, and visiting species he has observed, which make up a total of ninety-five:—

"Of nearly one hundred species in this garden or vicinity, some forty-nine are residents, twenty-three summer migrants, twenty-three winter and occasional visitors. I find a similar total in all large gardens of my acquaintance, with only few exceptions—as in the Lake district and on the Yorkshire coast, where aquatic birds swell the list, together with occasional rare birds seen only once or twice in a lifetime.

"Most large gardens are ideal natural bird-sanctuaries, suitable for the study of their economic value to vegetation generally. Out of the ninety-five here, at least thirty-two are almost entirely insectivorous, namely: Robin, Hedge-Sparrow, Wren, Treecreeper, Nuthatch, Green, Greater, and Lesser Spotted Woodpeckers, Pied Wagtail, Tree Pipit, Goldcrest, Great, Blue, Cole, Marsh, and Longtailed Tits, Cuckoo, Swift, Swallow, Martin, Blackcap, Nightingale, Common and Lesser Whitethroats, Chiffchaff, Willow-Wren, Redstart, Spotted Flycatcher. These in consequence of their value, claim complete protection. Many additions to the list might be made, but I consider these the pre-eminent insect destroyers. I should add the Barn and Brown Owls, also the Kestrel, so persecuted by keepers, more because it is a Hawk than for any damage it does to game.

"The quantity of pests destroyed annually by the birds even on this short list requires no strength of imagination. Some idea can be formed by watching the parent-birds feed the young for a few hours, and by totalling the hours, days, and weeks, and

the number of parents and nestlings in a single garden. This leaves no doubt as to how vegetation would fare without them. Many seed and fruit-eating birds, in fact, nearly all birds, feed their young on insects, grubs, caterpillars, and the like, so that we have in birds an important factor in horticulture and agriculture, and one that cannot be overestimated.

"In garden, farm, and game-preserve we have a wild field, and better education is needed as to the real value of bird-life. Keepers and gardeners should be very practical naturalists, as no one has better opportunity for studying birds' habits, but as a rule both are deficient in this knowledge and do what is worst for their own interests. Rare species are at once shot, either for curiosity or identification. Collectors are equally guilty. Game-preserving accounts for the decimation of some of our most useful birds. Here we had quite a number of Kestrels a few years ago; several nested in this garden annually; but two or three years since a smart trapper or two came on the scene. By chance I came across their "vermin-pole"; at least fifty Kestrels were nailed up, with the usual cats' tails, weasels, stoats, an odd Magpie, numerous Jays, and, least of all, rats' tails. That the Kestrel is an enemy I do not believe, having lived on game estates all my life and not having met with one single proof that game is part of its diet.

"Ten years ago a moderate number only of Wood-Pigeons existed here, and quite a lot of Jays. The invasion of trappers soon reduced the Jays to *nil*. Formerly we had a number in the garden, now all have vanished. These two species afford a fine example of Nature's balance. The Jay we know to be very fond of eggs, particularly the Ring-Dove's; and until two or three years ago this kept the balance about right. With the destruction of the Jays, the Wood-pigeons have increased from hundreds to thousands.

"Owls, for Protective and other reasons, escape here, but generally they share the fate of Kestrel and Jay. Our stock is quite a dozen. Most orchards suffer from the Codlin Moth grub. Here we form the exception, and this I attribute to the work of the three Woodpeckers, Nuthatch, Treecreeper, and Tits, especially the Blue and Great Tits.

The Greater Spotted Woodpecker haunts all through the year some big filberts for the nut-weevil.

"Although our list of birds is fairly representative, there are curious exceptions. The Wryneck is not found here at all; only one Redstart has been seen in ten years; the Cornrake is also absent, but I learn that such is the case where it was formerly abundant. The Tree Sparrow almost re-

places the House-Sparrow. It has increased in ten years from a few dozens to many hundreds, which roost in a long stretch of bamboos every night. Their song singly is of a chirpy nature, but when they assemble to roost such a chorus of song is heard as is very remarkable.

"The recent sharp frost and snow proved a terrible disaster to birds, and I fear the insectivorous kinds have suffered most."

Birds in the War Area.

LIEUT. PATRICK CHUBB writes with reference to birds on the Western front :

"On the river Ancre about 600 yards from the trenches, there are numbers of Coots and Moorhens, who are apparently entirely oblivious to the tremendous battle all round them. Before the 'push' they were about 400 yards from our front line trenches opposite Thiepval, and in front of our field-guns.

"Near La Basse Canal I saw a beautiful albino Swallow in among a crowd of ordinary Swallows. It was pure white, with reddish-pink eyes."

Captain Antony Buxton, whose Bird Observations contributed to the *Times* last year, were reproduced in *Bird Notes and News*, writes a second article (January 10th, 1917), in which he gives an interesting account of the nesting of Montague Harriers :

"I found the valley of that now famous river the Ancre full of Hoopoes, and of a mysterious silent bird which flitted from reed bed to reed bed on one of the marshy ponds so common in the valley, the haunt of great and small Reed Warblers. The reeds were too thick to get a sight of this bird except when flying, and then only for a moment, but, after several days of watching, I got my telescope on to a pair apparently courting in the air over the centre of the pond. They were what I had suspected them to be, Little Bitterns, and if only I had had a boat I think I could have found the nest.

MONTAGUE HARRIERS.

"On the Somme battlefield another hawk might often be seen last summer hunting low over the cornfields and that wild dull stretch of brown battle ground, the Montague's Harrier. I never found his nesting site there, but it was probably in the marshes of the Somme or the Ancre. Nearer the coast there is a stretch of marsh between the sandhills and the cultivated land, and at this place I snatched three evenings 'Montague' hunting.

"There were several cocks hawking about from time to time over the marsh, but it was hard to find a place to sit down and spy from, owing to the flatness of the country and the numbers of large bushes which obstructed one's view. On the first evening I saw two cocks, met in the air by two hens, and undoubtedly the latter were fed by their husbands, but I was unable definitely to mark either of the hens down. Still, I had a rough idea of the probable whereabouts of the nest of one of them, and on the second evening, with a friend, I distinctly saw through the telescope the cock come over the place where I believed the hen to be sitting and thrust out its claw, in which was something—I believe a lizard. In a moment she was up and circling towards him. When just below and downwind of him, she turned a back somersault, while he dropped his prey through the air for 6ft. or 10ft. from his hand into hers. It was done without effort on the part of either, and looked the easiest thing in the world, and so I suppose it is, for I saw the same performance on several occasions, and she never missed or looked like missing her dinner. Sometimes the gift was made

high in the air, sometimes near the ground, but the thrusting out of the foot to show the prize and the method of dropping it from the cock to the hen were always the same. When she had got it she planed down as I first thought to the nest, but I was wrong, for after waiting for five minutes, during which time she no doubt ate her dinner, apparently by a pool of water, in order to wash her beak and feet, she rose again, and after several evolutions lit in the marsh away from the water.

"Very, very carefully we marked the spot by this twig, that yellow flower, and other minute details. We had walked to within 10 yards when she rose in fright and noisy rage from her nest of four eggs in the grass, and while we looked at them she never ceased her cries, and circled continuously above us. The nest of flattened blades of grass and uninteresting-looking eggs had an artificial appearance; they reminded me of a clutch of Easter eggs I was once unfortunate enough to find in a haycock at a children's party, to the undoing of my stomach, for they were bad. There are plenty of such nests to be seen at the proper season in confectioners' shop windows. The bird returned in circles to the nest before we were 300 yards away, and I saw the whole process of the feeding of the hen and also the nest on the following evening. These Harriers are apparently very punctual at meals, for this bird was fed at 5.25 to a minute on each of the three evenings, and I would advise anyone in search of a nest to post himself, with a good glass, at 5.15 at an advantageous spot not too near where he believes the nest to be. I say not too near, because the cock is much more shy, though less bad-tempered, than the hen. Heaven grant that no egg-clutcher benefits by this advice!"

SNIPES AND ROOK.

FROM France also "H. T. C." writes to the *Scotsman* (February 3rd, 1917).

"Not far from our horse lines is a small wood, and through it runs a shallow streamlet. In ordinary times this streamlet does not find favour with the birds, but now that the ground is frozen hard in every direction, they congregate along its course. The sides are very muddy, churned up by the trampling

of horses, and the leaves cluster thickly over every inch of ground or are swirled downwards by the streamlet. Although shell holes not a dozen paces from the streamlet are frozen hard, the ice does not seem to encroach upon the stream's muddy banks. To-day a pair of Jack Snipe are sheltering under a tiny tuft of withered grass. They stand so silently still that it is difficult to distinguish them, except by the glint of their bright eyes. A horse comes down to the edge of the stream, and treads almost upon the watching birds, but they do not move. When I step aside, and take refuge behind a tree trunk they move slowly out on to the mud, and, dancing a weird, little, hopping step, they apparently startle the aquatic insects, for immediately the long bill is probed into the yielding mud, and something too minute to see is captured. Suddenly they catch sight of me hiding behind the tree trunk, and fly off, but in a few minutes are back again trampling and catching insects as before.

"The Rooks love bathing on frosty days, and with ice all around them they will splash and duck their heads and shoulders in the cold water, and apparently enjoy the experience. Yesterday several were bathing in a stream where the ice had been broken by some passing vehicle. All to-day, although an icy wind has been blowing, they have been "weaving" as they pass up and down on their long flights. I have never been able to understand the reason for this manœuvre, but it is interesting to watch the vast flocks of the Rooks collect and make the most wonderful evolutions in the air. Sometimes their noisy clamour is very pronounced, and to-day they seem to be particularly excited. There is one of their manœuvres which I cannot understand. On very stormy days, when the wind is blowing fiercely they rise from a field in our rear and fly across the roadway, each carrying in its beak a round object which looks like a pebble. They settle down in the next open space, and though I have frequently tried to investigate the matter, I cannot discover what it is they carry across. One of the gunners declares that it is a stone, and is used as ballast. Frequently a Rook will pick up a stick, although it is long past nest building time, and carry it for some distance, executing a sort of game in the air, dropping

the stick, and catching it in its beak, then dropping it again, and gripping it with one foot. This is repeated several times, until the Rook, apparently tiring of the game, drops the stick and flies off to greet a friend. At times they collect in large numbers, together with carrion crowds, and Hoodies, and feed amiably enough in 'No Man's Land.' Some parts of the front are more favoured than others, and I know of one place where the Hoodies can be counted by the hundreds."

The communication of "C. P. B.," from an Egyptian camp at Marsa Matruh (*Field*, March 17th, 1917), will interest many members of the Society by its allusion to the trade in Quails, alluded to by Brigadier-General Page Croft, M.P., at the Annual Meeting of the R.S.P.B.

"By December the country was clear of bird life except for the local residents. In that month the little Ringed Plover and Kentish Plover still strutted along the shore, and a pair of Kingfishers attracted attention as the weekly steamer tied up to the buoys. The Pied Wagtail was by far the most common and most tame, coming into the tents and mess huts with impunity. The Desert Wheatear and Short-toed Larks were noted, and I saw a Western Mourning Chat—so called because it is more distinctly black on white than white on black—sitting on some telegraph wires on Christmas eve. Among the rocks the Stonechats were much in evidence. In the wadis, or ravines, an occasional flock of blue Rock Pigeons hovered round the water holes. Even the hawks and falcons found life dull, and moved to other hunting grounds, though Egypt would not be Egypt without an occasional Kestrel, Peregrine, Kite, or Harrier.

"During the first four months (August to November) I saw the following birds, and had an expert been with me he would have recognised, no doubt, many more; but I give these few for what they are worth: Swallow (common and Egyptian), Crag Martin, Starling (common), Short-toed and Bifasciated Lark. The last is described in my notebook as greyish-brown body; when on the ground looks like a big Thrush or small Courser; when it flies it shows two distinct white stripes about $\frac{1}{2}$ in. apart on

the wings, hence the name *bifasciata*. Then there were the Song Thrush, Rock Thrush, Blackbird, Pied, Grey, and Blue-headed Yellow Wagtails, the last named one of the most graceful birds I saw. The Wheatears were well represented. The Desert Chat was the most common, always flying from bush to bush or stone to stone, and showing the white patch on his rump. The Stonechats on the rocks played hide and seek in the same way, while the Western Mourning Chat sometimes sat on the wire fences busily catching flies. Up till November the Chiffchaff was very common, and a Lesser White-throat put in an occasional appearance. Shrikes, too, abounded; rather hard to distinguish, as many had not got their full plumage, but I noted the lesser Grey Shrike, Red-backed Shrike, and the Masked Shrike. Fortunately for them there were plenty of beetles, and the Shrikes had their "ladders" in Egypt, as elsewhere. The Pied and Spotted Flycatchers made a short stay, as did also a flock of Linnets. An occasional Redstart, Blue-throated Warbler, and Robin completed my list of the smaller birds.

"Quail began to arrive on August 23rd, and for the next fortnight every bush, every bit of scrub, supported a net. In other places the Beduins supplement the netting by bush beating, which seemed to be most successful. One whistles to attract the bird, while the other pulls a net, hung on poles about 6ft. apart, over the bush or fig tree. The bird seldom misses the net, and finds its way for the price of one piastre (about 2½d.) into the crate of the local dealer, who transmits it to Alexandria. From there it journeys to Leadenhall Market, and finally appears on the plate of an epicure at the Savoy or Ritz, who pays a sum for it which would keep the Bedouin birdcatcher in food for days.

"The Cream-coloured Courser, in lots of three or four, was very common in August and September, though they are wary birds and difficult to get near. In a wadi, or ravine, about six miles from the coast—the only place inland with pools of water in that part of the country—I was lucky to find a big pack of Sandgrouse, probably the so-called Senegal Sandgrouse; rather like a greyish-brown Pigeon with feathered legs, but best recognised by its curious disyllabic note. The same pools harboured Wild Duck, Teal, and Snipe."

The Royal Society for the Protection of Birds.

ANNUAL MEETING.

The Annual Meeting of the Society was held on March 22nd, 1917, at the Middlesex Guildhall, Westminster, by permission of the Chairman of the County Council. The Duchess of Portland, President of the Society, presided, and was supported by Mr. Montagu Sharpe, Chairman of Council; Lord Desborough, Brigadier-General Page Croft, M.P., Sir John Cockburn, the Hon. Mrs. Henniker, Dr. Drewitt, the Hon. Mrs. Drewitt, Miss Hall, Mr. F. E. Lemon (Hon. Secretary), Mrs. Lemon, and Mr. Meade-Waldo, Members of the Council. Among those who wrote regretting inability to be present were: Mr. Ogilvie-Grant and Miss Clifton, absent through illness; the Countess of Stamford, General Sir Robert Baden-Powell, Mr. E. S. Montagu, M.P., Sir Herbert Maxwell, Canon Vaughan, Major Hesketh Prichard, Mr. E. N. Buxton, Mr. Harold Hodge, Captain Eric Parker, Mr. D. T. Cowan, and Dr. Bishop, the last-named sending a special donation of £5 and adding:

"I think there was never more need of a Society for the Protection of Birds than now, when every crank seems to be allowed to shriek in the newspapers and threaten the slaughter of many beautiful and useful birds. As a salmon and trout fisher of many years' standing, I must protest against the desire to exterminate the Heron and allied birds. The Society must be more than ever watchful and fearful."

General Baden Powell wrote:

"I am very anxious to devise some sort of award for kindness to animals and nature-study in addition to the badges we already give on these lines in the Boy Scout Movement. But pressure of work, owing to absence of most of our men on Service has delayed my programme so far"

The Duchess of Portland, in opening the proceedings, drew special attention to the importance of protecting birds as the farmers' best friends, and to the Society's new leaflet designed to give information on this subject. Later on, in reference to a remonstrance from one speaker against the caging of birds, Her Grace expressed her hearty sympathy with the protest, and said she spent much of her time and substance in buying and freeing birds that had been caught and caged. The Annual Report and Accounts were adopted, on the motion of Mr. Sharpe, seconded by Mr. Fleming Crooks, who alluded to the temporary prohibition, which should be made permanent, of the importation of wild birds' plumage and of live Quails. The resolution was supported also by Brigadier-General Page Croft, who remarked that there was extraordinary ignorance in this country with regard to bird-life, and much want of knowledge was shown in the House of Commons by those who talked about country matters, but had never lived in the country in their lives.

Mr. Meade-Waldo proposed, and Sir John Cockburn seconded, the following resolution, which was carried unanimously, and it was further agreed that a copy be sent to the President of the Board of Agriculture:

"That in view of imminent danger to Food-Crops arising from Insect Plagues, especially on newly turned-up land; in view also of the shortage of hand labour for dealing with these pests, and of the fact that the Bird is the one ever-present and ever-active destroyer of injurious grub, weevil, and fly, this Society urges the imperative necessity for full protection of Insect-eating Birds, and emphatically protests against any relaxation of Close-time or other regulations

which would permit the destruction of such Birds on any pretext whatever."

The President, Council, and Officers of the Society were re-elected, the speakers to the resolutions including Lord Desborough, Mr. W. P. Pycraft, and Mr. Cosmo Blore.

A report of the proceedings will, as usual, be incorporated with the Annual Report of the Society, sent to all subscribers and obtainable from the Society's Office.

COUNCIL MEETINGS.

THE Council of the Society met at the Middlesex Guildhall, S.W., on January 26th, Mr. Montagu Sharpe, Chairman, presiding. There were also present: Mr. Bell, Mr. Meade-Waldo, Mr. Trevor-Battye, Mr. Lemon (Hon. Sec.), Mrs. Lemon, Hon. Mrs. Drewitt, Miss Hall, Miss Clifton, Miss Pollock, and Miss Gardiner (Secretary).

Hon. Secretary's Report.

The Hon Secretary reported that six lectures had been given during January, and twenty-two Bird and Tree Festivals held since the last meeting of the Council. The Bird-Protection Order for Cambridgeshire had been renewed. The sale of the Society's Greeting-card had been satisfactory, and the original painting, kindly given by Mr. Thorburn, had been purchased by a Fellow of the Society.

Finance and General Purposes Committee.

The statement of accounts for the year 1916 was presented and approved. The Committee reported the loss of two Local Hon. Secretaries, Mr. John Elliot, a Life Fellow of the Society and Hon. Sec. for Wirral since 1903, who died in December; and Miss Grace Hawkins, Hon. Sec. for Wolverhampton since 1909, whose services are unfortunately lost to the Society through her change of residence. A resolution expressing regret and appreciation of services kindly rendered in the past, was

entered in each case. The following were elected Fellows and Members of the Society:

FELLOWS.—Miss Winifred Austin (London W.), Leslie G. Austin (London, W.), Wilfred O. Bailey (Cobham), Mrs. Connell (Brocken-hurst), Rev. Henry Gow (London, N.W.), Reginald T. Hindley (Macclesfield).

MEMBERS.—Mrs. A. B. Allan (Pollok-shields), G. Abbey (Aston Rowant), J. B. Crosfield (Reigate), Dr. Eaton (Cleator), Mrs. Ensor (Devizes), F. J. B. Lincs (Handsworth), Mrs. Bernard Old (Handsworth), Miss Marjorie Percy (Gunnersbury), Alderman C. Pinkham (London, N.W.), Oswald J. Wilkinson (Manchester).

LIFE MEMBER.—Lady Stirling Maxwell (Pollokshaws).

Letters had been received from ornithologists in Russia, asking for particulars of the Bird-Protection laws in great Britain and her Colonies. With regard to Competitions in 1917 it was decided that the usual Shields and Prizes should be awarded in connexion with Bird and Tree work in Elementary Schools, but that the Public School Essay Competition should again be suspended, and that the question of organizing any such effort in Boys' Preparatory Schools must be postponed. The acting Vice-Presidents and Council were nominated for election at the Annual Meeting, no other nominations having been received; and the draft Annual Report was presented. Considerable discussion took place with respect the relation of wild birds to agriculture and to the protection of insectivorous species; and it was agreed that a leaflet on the subject should at once be prepared.

Next meeting of the Council, April 13th.

Copies of Mr. Thorburn's charming little picture of the Whitethroat, designed for the Society's Christmas Card, may be had, mounted for framing, price one shilling.

BIRD-PROTECTION IN AUSTRALIA.

MR. CHARLES BARRETT (Australian Army Medical Corps) writes to the Society while in camp at Victoria awaiting orders for active service:—

"The friends of bird life are an ever-growing army in Australia, but the fight against plume-hunters and egg-thieves is still an uphill one. Collectors of skins especially are doing much to make still rarer some of our rarest birds. 'In the cause of science,' thousands of beautiful creatures are being slaughtered, and it is a wonder to me how men who call themselves bird-lovers can also be collectors.

"Now for the brighter side. The Gould League of Bird Lovers continues to flourish and in Victoria alone has about 60,000 members. Many leading citizens are showing practical interest in the League, which proposes shortly to enter upon a scheme for erecting nest-boxes and providing food-tables and baths for wild birds in State school grounds, parks, and public gardens.

"This military camp is situated in a large and beautiful park, and in leisure hours I do some bird observing. Sparrows and Starlings are very numerous, and so tame that I can, by sitting very still in my tent, see them feeding a few feet away."

[Mr. Barrett, if in London in winter-time, would perhaps be surprised to see Sparrows, Pigeons, and Gulls feeding almost from the hands of their benefactors].

"Often, too, the blithe song of a Skylark delights my ears. Of native birds, I have noted the lovely scarlet-breasted Robin, the Ground Lark (Meadow Pipit), Welcome Swallow, Rosella Parrot (feeds in the gum-trees on the outskirts of the Park), Honey-eaters of several species, and the Pied Grallina (*Grallina picata*). The Grallina is popularly known as the Mud-Lark. It builds a large mud nest of the size and shape of a small pudding-basin, on a horizontal bough. A study in black and white, this graceful bird frequents pools and marshy places, pattering daintily over the mud in search of pond snails. The snails are the intermediate host of the liver fluke (so dreaded by sheep-farmers) so that the Grallinas are birds of great economic value."

BIRD-PROTECTION IN RUSSIA.

CONSIDERABLE interest in the better protection of birds is being manifested in Russia, and several letters on the subject have been received by the R.S.P.B., making enquiries as to the laws in force in Great Britain and her Colonies for the preservation of birds and of wild nature in general. From Kharkow M. Zakharoff writes:

"In Russia all protection is reduced to the founding of some reserves for birds, such as, for example, have been formed in Caucasia for the protection of the Francolin. Some horticulturists and country gentlemen occupy themselves with the protection of birds. The Department of Agriculture has founded preserves for Zibelines in Siberia, which should have great importance for the protection of the fauna of that region. One of these has an extent of 60 verstes by 70 [roughly, 45 miles by 50]; the other 40 by 50 verstes. There are also some smaller ones. The Imperial Geographical Society has instituted a Commission for the Protection of Nature; and this object is also promoted by the Society of Naturalists of Riga and the Society of the Friends of Nature of Kharkow.

"This month there has been formed at Kharkow a Commission for the Protection of Birds, who plan to circulate leaflets and pamphlets among the people as much as possible. It also organises the protection of the birds in the park of the town.

"I should be very grateful if you would give me some advice, especially as to the propagation of the protection of Nature among the young."

Russia was not one of the parties to the International Convention of 1902, and with regard to her legislation it is stated by Mr. Holte Macpherson, in "Comparative Legislation for the Protection of Birds" (R.S.P.B., 1909) that none has been enacted, except by way of local regulations, since 1892. Under the Agricultural Code of that year close seasons are provided for all game birds and for other species, except birds of prey, there

is nominally a close-time from May 1st to July 15th, during which the destruction of nests and eggs is also prohibited. Mr. Forbush relates ("Useful Birds and their Protection") that the destruction of certain birds for

their plumage in Siberia led to a plague of locusts and cutworms in 1895 that threatened famine; and enormous quantities of willow-grouse have been destroyed for the trade in wings. Moscow has also a noted bird-market.

The Plumage Trade.

PROHIBITION of the import of plumage has come at last, as a temporary necessity, and by a side-wind. Three years ago, in March, 1914, the nation expressed its opinion on the subject, through its representatives in Parliament, in no uncertain manner; it seemed for the moment as though honest convictions were to outweigh vested interests. Two and a half years ago the outbreak of war might well have suggested to any Government the desirability for suppressing useless extravagance, and to any woman the decency of refraining from "murderous millinery" and the "white feather" of cruelty. A year ago the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds and the Trustees of the British Museum again pressed upon a Board of Trade interested in tonnage and a Government talking about economy, the plain sense of stopping a "useless and undesirable import and a wholly indefensible form of extravagance." Apparently, however, ospreys and birdskins are as essential to the people as the health-giving foods and drinks now prohibited in their company. One duty remains clear: to keep the anti-plumage campaign resolutely to the fore, in order that when the embargo is removed from ostrich-feathers, the feathers of wild birds killed for their plumage may be banned for all time, no matter what tales of Bird-of-paradise "farms" or Egret "hutches" may be served up by the trade.

SALMON-FLIES AND RARE BIRDS' FEATHERS.

By W. BADEN-POWELL, K.C.

THE Salmon-Fly of yesterday, and for nearly a hundred years past, was made, increasingly as time went on, of brighter and brighter coloured feathers taken from the skins of innumerable rare birds.

Salmon fishing, by rod and line for sport, is in vogue not only in England, Ireland, and Scotland, but all over Norway, Sweden, Iceland, America, Canada, many parts of New Zealand, and other parts of the world. No census exists reliably informing us what the number of fishermen may be who use the salmon-fly, or even of the number of tackle-makers who make and sell salmon-flies. A general but crude view may be that there are thousands of towns in most of the countries named, and that there is scarcely a town in which a fishing-tackle-maker, or several of the trade, would not be found who make and sell salmon-flies.

Then we turn to the so-called fashionable or standard "flies" used all over the world. These on good authority include some 400 particular patterns, known as "Standards" and many more "outside" patterns. Size of the actual fly, to use in various river conditions, is of great importance, and an expert would usually have with him several sizes of each of his pet patterns, and duplicates of all these to anticipate losses and breakages. Thus the tradesman, in order to suit the various choices of his patrons must make up immense numbers of patterns and sizes and duplicates for his stock. So we cannot attempt to assess the hundreds of thousands of flies that must be tied yearly in the trade.

Each of these flies is a gaudy display, or bouquet, of brilliant colour, mainly obtained

from the feathers of rare birds. In early times more plain sombre feathers of common birds found favour, but in recent years more and more brilliancy has been demanded and the bright-coloured feathers of rare birds became indispensable to fishermen, so that a large market was set up with the tackle-makers by importers.

What a salmon wants or why he bites at a salmon "fly" or "lure," no one can at present say; at least we have no scientific information as yet of the working of the Salmon's brain. We do know that our scientists aver that the salmon's eye does see as we see, and is capable of appreciating colour, that is, the colours of the spectrum or the prism. We do know that the salmon takes coloured lures, and often takes one colour, or general coloured appearance, in preference to another. This preference for a particular colour has been usually put down to his particular taste, and particular rare feathers put into the fly have been worshipped for their power of enticement. Even so far have some writers ventured as to aver that the salmon in different rivers are colour epicures; in one river preferring blue, in another red, in another yellow, and so on.

But Nature's laws have recently been applied to these ideas. The science of light radiating in water, reflections of local colouring, prismatic colouring effects, and the visibility or the reverse of colour on opaque materials in certain angles of light, have *proved* that in an immense proportion of positions near the fish the opaque-built, or feather-built, salmon-fly displays no colour at all. It shows merely as a grey-black silhouette. In some positions, even when the sun would light up the beautiful coloured picture, the reflected colour of the river bottom transforms the picture to the one all-over colour of the bottom, say as green, or as yellow, and so on.

Exhaustive experiments, coupled with photographs, were made in 1912 by Dr. Francis Ward from a subaqueous chamber, as if from the fish's eye, and the reports and photographs were published in the *Field* of May 4th, 1911. Before and at that time I was making experiments, with I admit much less perfect instruments, in the same line, but with the addition of prismatic tests, and of many novel attempts to exhibit trans-

lucently prismatic-coloured material in substitution for the opaque coloured feathers of the existing flies.

To put the matter as shortly as may be just enough to explain, the examination of numerous samples of the feather-built flies had in every case proved them at fault and to fail in exhibiting the nature of lure they were intended and believed to exhibit. That was manifest; and there the Ward experiments, so far at least as has been published, ended. My experiments proceeded to seek the antidote, and I have certainly found it to an effective extent, if not perhaps conclusively.

After many trials of materials I found that the fine wavy waste ends of pure undrawn silkworm gut, dyed to the several prismatic colours, produced the desired translucent transmission of brilliant colour-effects in water; that such effects were obtainable at all angles of light, indeed most brilliant when the sunlight was behind the lure, *i.e.*, just when the opaque high-coloured feathers showed as mere dim grey-black silhouettes, and also that by using two or more, juxtaposition of prism, colours such as, say, green, yellow, and orange, or, say, blue, green, and yellow—different coloured river reflections could be mastered so as to exhibit the lure in its intended form and colour at a sufficient distance. Further, the translucent prismatic colours in their proper sequence and detail were under prismatic influence, simply intensified. Thus, as far as the experiments were able to show, an all-round effective lure could be produced, showing itself unchanged in shape or colour where the feather-fly would be seen as a mere silhouette.

The salmon appeared to be highly satisfied with the dyed-gut flies, as in actual fishing they have proved successful. If in fact (but which I deny) a salmon is colour-blind, as some men hold, there can be no harm in offering him a coloured lure. If on the other hand, the salmon wants colour and Nature's laws annul it in the appearance of the lure, he cannot see it, in the opaque feather at reasonable distance, or perhaps at all. Then the glittering gut offers him colour which he can see, and, what is far more important, a lure unchanging in shape and colour during its approach in his range of vision, and flashing brilliantly.

In the make-up the body is covered with silver or gold tinsel, with "butts" and sometimes half the body wrapped with mohair of the master-colour of the pattern.

This it is evident that *not a single bird's feather need be used*. In some I have used a bit of ostrich or a white-spot feather of the jungle-cock, to satisfy man's fancy, but I have caught as many fish on the flies made only of gut and mohair.

In so compressed an article it is impossible to go fully into details, but the actual flies can be inspected or bought at Messrs. Little's in the Haymarket.

One thing certain is that the *new gut-flies* kill salmon as successfully as any of the expensive *feather-built flies*, and therefore, so far as my experience goes, there is no need for fishermen to use any rare birds' feathers, or indeed any feathers at all.

Notes.

The provision made in gallant Lord Lucas's will for the upkeep of the bird-sanctuary in Norfolk in which he took so much interest, has drawn from Sapper Vincent, R.E., formerly his head-keeper, some stories that illustrate the freshness of delight afforded by wild nature to men in the hurly-burly of political or military careers. Many members of the R.S.P.B. recollect Viscount Grey's memorable remark, made years ago at one of the Annual Meetings of the Society, that the love of birds and the pleasure of seeing and listening to them "is in the long run a happier thing than personal success." In a letter to the Society on the subject of Bird-Protection in Malta, Field-Marshal Lord Methuen speaks of flowers and birds as "the two happiest companions given us to live amongst." Lord Lucas paid his last visit to Norfolk in the summer of 1915, to see the Marsh Harriers which—driven out of England by keeper and collector, and absent from their last stronghold on the Norfolk Broads for some forty years—were at last breeding again in the sanctuary on the Whiteslea estate. He visited the nest, saw the eggs, and watched the birds flying, with cries of protest, above their home. "What a sight!" was Lord Lucas's delightful comment; "this is probably the only pair breeding in the British Isles. Jim, *this is the next great thing to the war.*"

* * *

One of the daily papers, apparently at a loss how to fill its columns, reports that certain German prisoners are "happy in their captivity" and so "fond of birds and animals" that they have gone in for, keeping rabbits to give variety to their *menu* and have a number of caged Robins in their

camp. This is precisely the way in which Germans might be expected to exhibit their "fondness"; but why they should be permitted by the authorities to further outrage a heaven they have sufficiently offended, by keeping English Robins in captivity is more than the normal Englishmen can understand.

* * *

Two forms of "cage" for wild birds in contrast to the few miserable inches given to the solitary prisoner of the Huns and of their British *confreres*, are brought to notice by French and Swiss writers. The first of these is the proposition made in the new work "*Les Jardins Volières*," of which Miss de la Rive writes in another column. The second is the great public aviary which is to be established (according to *L'Ami des Animaux*) at Neuchatel for the reception of caged birds which their owners wish for any reason to be rid of or to free. Native species are to be accustomed to ample flying space and to be liberated at the most propitious season; foreign species, which it is supposed would not flourish in freedom, are to be housed as in the great aviaries in the Zoological Gardens of London and New York. Mr. Hudson has shown, in one of the R.S.P.B. leaflets, that the old stories about liberated birds dying of starvation because they cannot find food, or being pecked to death by their wild brethren, are fictitious; and London parks have demonstrated that even escaped parrot and canary can maintain themselves; but the Neuchatel scheme forms at least a pleasing variety on the public aviary as it is too often exists in English municipal parks.

* * *

The phenomenally long and bitter winter through which we have passed (or hope to have passed by the time these lines are in print) has been a terrible one for birds, especially the insectivorous species, which have died by the thousands and tens of thousands, in the country. The Thrush family and the Plovers appear to have suffered especially, "Though each household might," as the *Times* comments, "have made its garden a centre of salvation for the feathered folk of a small area around, and have enjoyed the rich reward of the presence of unusual visitors at the bird table; all this would scarcely touch the fringe of the enveloping calamity which falls upon wild-bird-life in Britain whenever a long spell of severe weather comes in winter. . . . In gardens where no bird table attracts its pensioners the silent absence of bird-life is almost oppressive." No member of the R.S.P.B., it may be safely said, neglected such of the little hungry folk as could be kept alive by generous provision of scraps of every kind: how indeed could he or she face the dire possibility of potato and bread famines within the home who had not done something to save other beings from starvation? Perhaps the biggest family to assist was that which invaded the garden of a bird-lover near the Lancashire coast, where a screaming, scrambling, turbulent cloud of three hundred Gulls were for some days applicants for out-relief—and got it. The Curator of Ipswich Museum counted some thirty Gulls at one time in his garden, but after the experience of the Society's Hon. Secretary at Blundellsands this seems a negligible number!

* * *

The protracted winter has necessarily delayed nesting. Thrush, Blackbird, and Dunnock had begun to sing when the March frenzy arrested their melodies; but their lover's raptures had taken them no further. Now, however, the time has come when all Nesting boxes should be securely fixed on wall or tree ready for house-hunting couples; and as many enquiries have reached the office of the R.S.P.B. on the subject, it may be said that the "Tree-hole" boxes (with all the notable Berlepsch features) and the "Walden" boxes, may still be had from the Society, difficulties as to wood and workers notwithstanding.

While the allusions made by many poets to bird life have been quoted and commented on again and again, little reference has been made to the feeling for birds shown by Dante and the references to them scattered up and down the *Divine Comedy*. They afford a charming chapter in a thoughtful little volume "*Corona Stellata*" which has been added to Dante literature by Miss Isa J. Postgate.

DORSET BIRDS.

FROM Weymouth, Mr. H. P. Wilkes writes:

The history of the birds of Dorset abounds in instances of some of our rarer visitors; Weymouth and the neighbouring locality seems to be particularly favoured. Such birds as the Pratincole, the Avocet, the Hoopoe and the Grey Phalarope have been recorded in the vicinity, the last-mentioned sometimes coming in "considerable numbers." It was only last spring (1916) that I had news of a pair of Golden Orioles and their nest a few miles distant, and up to not long ago Hobbies used to nest regularly at Bloxworth. Among Dorset's resident birds can be numbered the Peregrine, which has several haunts along the sea-coast, from St. Alban's Head away to Torquay and the Start Point in Devon: one pair, breeding in the immediate locality have had a somewhat chequered career. The nest was the usual hollow scraped on the steep sides of a grassy cliff in company with the nests of Herring Gulls and an occasional Rock-Dove: a short time ago, however, some fishermen discovered the monetary value of the eggs and from then until now, clutches have been taken every year. Last year the Peregrine moved to its nesting-site to a long fissure in a perpendicular face of rock, but even here the ruthless hand of man has reached by means of rope. The Rock-Doves (true *C. livia*), at best a very local species as a pure breed, are on the decrease owing to the depredations of the falcon; Guillemot, Razorbill and Puffin, however, do not seem to be molested and breed in moderate numbers. I have found the Rock Pipit's nest here in June with a second clutch of three, and the birds themselves are more numerous than one is led to suppose. Wheat-ears, Whinchats, Stonechats, Cora and Cirl Buntings are also to be found, with

many other interesting but commoner varieties.

The hard weather of the beginning of February was very productive of uncommon visitors, especially among the Ducks. The large stretch of marsh-land to the east of the town, flooded in January, froze well when the frost came. I remember seeing a flock of seven Redwing on the 30th of January, very weak but in good plumage. On the ice and in the little unfrozen pools, Tufted Duck were the first to make their appearance, but Mallard did not seem to be about until later; a flock of twelve Scoter came the first day of the ice, but soon went out to the sea. Later, Pochard and Wigeon appeared in large numbers, many of which fell victims to the gun of the fowler. A large flock of the latter were seen in the bay

and numbered one hundred and fifty-two. On February 7th, I saw either a Barnacle or Brent Goose, the former I think, feeding with Sheldrake and Tufted Duck, and heard a report of nine Grey-Lag Geese seen early in the morning. The previous day there was a flock of some thirty-five Snew out in the bay; these remained some time, keeping company with Pochard, Wigeon and Tufted Duck. A Pintail Drake, hanging up in a poulterer's shop, proved, on inquiry to have been shot locally. Among other interesting species that have occurred here within the past few weeks have been one or two Red-Throated Divers, some Great Crested Grebes in full spring plumage, one or two Greater Black Backed Gulls, a flock of Curlew, Shoveler, Teal, Brambling, Redshank, Ringed and Golden Plover.

Bird-and-Tree Competition.

ALL Schools which have not yet entered Teams for this year's Competition should do so at once. In addition to the competitions in counties where Challenge Shields are offered, there is an Open Class for all-comers, in which prizes are given. This year the subject has been introduced to the Elementary Schools of West Sussex by the Secretary of the Education Committee; and if sufficient Schools enter this year the Council of the R.S.P.B. will take into consideration the provision of a Sussex Shield.

Among the many Bird and Tree Festivals held since Christmas must be mentioned that at Buttermere School, winner of the Cumberland Shield, where the proceedings were conducted by the Rev. J. Irwin, songs and recitations were well given by the children, an apple-tree was planted by Mr. Philip Gatty, and scholars and teacher were entertained to tea. At the Western Boys' School, Southampton, a capital programme was gone through, including selections from the attractive "Bird and Tree Pageant," compiled by Mrs. Suckling. The prizes were presented by Professor Cock, of the Hartley University, who gave an appropriate and encouraging address. At Coleshill, on February 27th, a delightful account of the birds and trees of Australia was given by the Rev. W. S. Thomas, who related interesting experiences of his own, while residing in the Colony. Songs were sung by the School

choir, and a rambler-rose hedge planted.

At Barton Stacey the Hampshire Shield was presented on March 1. The Rev. A. C. Franklin presided and a playlet, "The Law of Love," was charmingly enacted by the children.

Although not strictly in connexion with Bird and Tree work it may be noted that two admirable performances of the Rev. G. Edward Young's musical play, "The Revolt of the Birds," were given recently by the young people of the Luton Wesleyan Church, and a sum of £90 realised for the Blinded Soldiers.

A pleasant and entertaining paper on "Bird and Tree Cadets," appears in the April Number of *The Children's Friend* (Messrs. Partridge & Co.).

SCHOOL GARDENS AND BIRDS.

A special appeal with regard to school gardens has been made by the Minister of Agriculture. In order to support this effort, the Society offer a Special Prize or prizes for the Essay or Essays giving the best account of the Birds of the Garden (home or school) in relation to insects, saying what food the birds (or any one bird) found there and what they took to their nestlings. This account can either form part of an Essay on any one of the birds concerned; or if a bird is chosen that does not come to the garden, then this subject can form a short

additional paper, written either at home or at school.

* * *

The following letter with regard to Bird and Tree work comes from the country school which took honours in the 1916 Competition, and represents the opinion of both a Master and a Mistress of experience and success:—

"I am commissioned to state my wife's opinion on the Bird and Tree Scheme. With it I entirely concur:—

1. It is something which all can do.
2. It brings children into intimate contact with the beautiful, which must have a refining influence.

3. It gives children their first start in Self-Education. They will notice as they go through life; every day their perspective will broaden; attention will be arrested by *seeming* trifles, subjects of interest will never be lacking; they will possess eyes to see and ears to hear; they will discover that whatever their station in life there is something they can do and do well; they will cultivate a habit of noting details; and surely all these things must have a tremendous influence on character.

4. In the hands of a Teacher of strong personality and enthusiasm it may be made the lever wherewith to lift a school out of the rut of inefficiency and want of interest into which it may have fallen. That is admittedly the case here.

5. It brings parents, and elder brothers and sisters who have long left school into contact with school life; and a very desirable thing this is, in the interests both of Teacher and children.

6. It will write "finis" to that tendency toward cruelty which I am afraid lurks somewhere in the back corners of every boy's character. Here in 1914-5 the essays and note-books were one long heart-breaking record of destroyed nests and eggs, of dead young birds, of destruction of plant life. This year (and I have read through all notes and essays) it was very different. There was hardly a record of a "pulled" nest; if eggs were broken it was by the birds' natural enemies. If there was destruction of plant life it never came to our ears.

7. The influence of Bird and Tree upon other subjects in the School curriculum is most marked. The interest aroused spreads

everywhere and bears fruit in nearly every subject—spelling, writing, composition, drawing, painting, everywhere in short. In this School drawing and painting (which had not been touched for some years) are the direct outcome of Bird and Tree work.

8. The effect on the children's minds is immense. Two years ago we encountered dull, uninteresting, and uninterested country children, possessing little school discipline and fewer manners. The change to-day is extraordinary. They are orderly, polite, keen, alert-minded, taking proper pride in their work and in themselves. Undesirable language is something long since dead. The upward progress dates entirely from the beginning of the Competition."

No doubt some of this transformation must be attributed to the new Teacher rather than to the Competition; but it is enough that it should have formed so valuable a lever. The writer adds that the subject demands keen interest and enthusiasm on the part of the Teacher in order to inspire the children. It is pleasant to know from other Teachers that the scheme itself was able to inspire them with that enthusiasm, even though their own knowledge of Birds and Tree had not been great to begin with.

Save the Food-crops.

Save our Bird Allies.

BIRDS, INSECTS & CROPS:

A War-time Leaflet for all Growers
of the Nation's Food Supplies.

Write for copies to the Secretary, Royal Society for the Protection of Birds, 23, Queen Anne's Gate, S.W. 1.

Also published by the Society: "OUR ALLY THE BIRD," Illustrated Leaflet, 9d. per dozen; "FARM, GARDEN, AND BIRDS": How to protect crops without destruction of Bird-life; price Sixpence.

BIRD NOTES AND NEWS (issued quarterly) will be sent post free to any address for 1s. per annum, payable in advance; single numbers, 3d.

To Members of the Society subscribing 5s. and upwards per annum it is forwarded gratis and post free.

Printed by WITHERBY & Co., 326, High Holborn, W.C., and published by the ROYAL SOCIETY FOR THE PROTECTION OF BIRDS, 23, Queen Anne's Gate, S.W.

Bird Notes & News

ISSUED QUARTERLY BY THE ROYAL SOCIETY
:: FOR THE PROTECTION OF BIRDS ::

Vol. VII.]

SUMMER, 1917.

[No. 6.]

The Board and the Birds.

"Some misunderstanding seems to have arisen about the action of the Board of Agriculture in recommending the destruction of sparrows. It is the common house-sparrow that does the harm. . . . But the house-sparrow must not be confused with the hedge-sparrow, which is an eminently useful bird to be encouraged by all possible means. . . . Those who pay rewards for house-sparrows or their eggs should see that they get the right article. . . . The Board would entirely disapprove of any general attack on small birds under the plea of sparrow-hunting."—*Board of Agriculture: official notice.*

So far on the path of commonsense the Board of Agriculture has at last been urged. It has been brought to realize that its constant incitement to the setting up of "sparrow" clubs in country districts, and of encouraging children to slaughter birds and nestlings and to take eggs, without any instruction or safeguard as to the irreparable harm that may be done by destroying small insect-eating birds, may lead to "misunderstanding." It dimly perceives that this action of a Government Department at a time of food-panic, and among a rural population only too ready to lump all wild things together as "vermin" and to destroy them with no more hesitation than the beetle is trodden on, may somehow lead to a "general attack on small birds." For so much let Bird-Protectors be thankful!

Unhappily the warning issued by the Board half-way through May comes a little late in the day. The genie of bird-destruction had been let loose from the bottle, and its blighting form will never again be brought back within the confines of humanity and commonsense by mere talk about "misunderstandings" and "disapproval." Moreover it is unhappily to be noted that in its own *Journal* for May (issued at the end of that month) the formation of "sparrow" clubs, with awards for adult and unfledged birds and for eggs, is again repeated, and the participation of children again referred

to, without a word of this mild warning. And the expenditure of public rates for purposes which the Board admits have led to "misunderstanding" and to the killing of useful birds, is approved without a solitary condition as to proof being furnished that (what the Board is pleased to call) "the right article"—the house-sparrow and the house-sparrow only—is destroyed.

The history of the Board of Agriculture's share in the work of bird-protection and bird-destruction, is a curious one when it is considered that every other great nation in the world bases its Bird-protection laws on the great value of insect-eating birds to agriculture.

In 1896, the Society for the Protection of Birds began to publish an Educational Series of Leaflets on wild birds, and in that year and the following one issued twenty-four of these, including the Owls, Starling, Swallow, Tits, Kestrel, Plover, and Wagtail. In August, 1897, the Board of Agriculture issued the first of its leaflets dealing with birds. Between that date and January, 1899, it published altogether nine leaflets; dealing respectively with Kestrel, Short-eared Owl, White Owl, Tits, Green Plover, Starling, Wagtail, Flycatcher, and Swallow. The S.P.B., seeing that the Board had taken up the good work the Society began and was covering the same ground, suspended operations. The Board brought its list to an untimely end, save that in 1903 it issued a condemnation of the House-Sparrow, with suggested rules for the formation of sparrow-clubs, in 1916 one on "Farm Vermin," which it made to include sparrows, rooks, wood-pigeons, and larks, and in the same year one on the methods to be adopted for killing wood-pigeons.

In all this time, not one leaflet setting forth or suggesting the value of birds in

general, especially all the insect-eating species. In the sparrow-club leaflet, which is constantly advertised and re-advertised, not a single caution as to the inclusion of other species, except a few words about the narrow beak and blue eggs of the hedge-sparrow, and the statement (the truth of which may be judged by village residents) that the "only bird likely to be mistaken for the house-sparrow is the tree-sparrow." In a later leaflet, again, comes a caution that receivers of heads should be careful not to pay twice for the same heads: not a word as to any care to be taken not to pay at all for heads or eggs of other birds.

In 1908, when the question of sparrow-clubs was last to the fore, a protest against their tendencies and certain results was addressed by the Society to the Board of Agriculture. (See *Bird Notes and News*, Autumn Number, 1908.) In 1916, and again in the present year, the Society urged upon the Board the need of leaflets pointing out the enormous benefits conferred upon agriculture by birds in general, and of publications tending to stimulate or promote the study of birdlife in relation to entomology and agriculture.

"In knowledge on this important subject (the Society pointed out) Great Britain is far behind some other countries, notably the United States of America; and among the generality of people it cannot be said to have any existence. In view of this lack of knowledge, encouragement given to destroy birds and to regard those of doubtful position as 'vermin,' must inevitably lead to the destruction of immense numbers of insectivorous species, whose value, at the present time especially, is incalculable. . . . The agricultural population is very fully aware of the depredations committed by certain species at certain times, these depredations being conspicuous and evident. But on the other hand, leaflets are most urgently needed to point out the great utility of birds in the destruction of countless insects and small rodents, and to stimulate first-hand and thorough observation of their feeding-habits throughout the year."

The Board replied by citing its twenty-year-old leaflets, and their new editions, also certain articles on one side or the other

which have appeared from time to time in its *Journal*: none of these answering to the requirement, except perhaps a lengthy report by Professor Newstead, the conclusions in which have been wholly ignored in the Board's leaflets.

In later protests, the Society drew particular attention to the serious danger to food-crops arising out of the employment of ignorant village children to destroy birds, nestlings, and eggs, for money rewards. The Board, with its unhappy knack of doing things in the wrong way, replied to this by a direction in one of its endless leaflets, that—

"If schoolchildren are set to work on the destruction of sparrows they should not be allowed to claim rewards unless the work has been done under the direct supervision of the schoolmaster or schoolmistress."

Thus, at a crisis when almost every school is understaffed, it proposes to occupy the time of teachers in the humiliating task of superintending Johnnie and Bobbie stoning, catapulting, and decapitating small birds; if teachers object to such a task as upsetting and counteracting their efforts to civilize the young barbarian—

"To teach your children gentleness
And mercy for the weak, and reverence
For life, which, in its weakness or excess,
Is still a gleam of God's omnipotence!"—

they are to incur the ill-will of Johnnie (possibly that of the lower class of parents) by standing between him and his pennies! Such "supervision" given in school hours would be a gross misuse of educational time; if out of them, an abuse of the teacher's leisure. That the whole proposition is an invasion of the business of Education does not appear to be resented by the Board of Education, whose answers to questions in the House are given on another page; and the wondering country may next find the Board of Education dictating the prices of potatoes and the composition of dog-biscuits. Happily many Education Committees have declined to countenance the proposition, and many teachers are declining to serve "sparrow"-clubs in or out of school hours.

The quotation which is given at the head

of this article from a recent pronouncement of the Board of Agriculture, may possibly be not unconnected with the issue of the Society's leaflet "Birds, Insects, and Crops." If so, its heads may be congratulated on at least reading such a leaflet as the Board itself should have issued. But here again the fatal genie dogged its steps. Having already commended bird-destruction of many kinds without the faintest allusion to laws or close-time, the Board now proceeds to advocate the use of strychnine, in complete obliviousness of the Poisoned Grain Clause of the Protection of Animals Act, 1911, under which farmers have been heavily fined for putting strychnine-soaked grain on their land. The added caution that no bird but the house-sparrow is to be allowed to pick up this poisoned grain, and that the sparrow must pick up every grain lest better creatures eat thereof and be killed, gives a comic element to what is otherwise a very grave matter.

Does it ever strike the Board of Agriculture that the labouring agriculturist, who has never been encouraged by the "authorities" to have the slightest respect for birdlife (beyond the nine subjects of the nine historic

leaflets) will not be likely to attach any importance whatever to this proviso?

Or does it ever strike the Board of Agriculture that village folk, and boys and children, wholly untaught (save here and there through the personal efforts of teachers and others) to know the birds and to value them, will attach any importance to the edict that House-Sparrows only should be killed in the present anti-small bird campaign which it has set on foot?

Or does it occur to Departments and Boards and law-makers that a year's official instruction to set laws at naught, will make waste-paper of such laws for years to come?

For this is the crux of the whole matter. *If* the countryside had such knowledge as to exercise careful discrimination in the preservation of useful birdlife; *if* there were no ignorant prejudice against birds; *if* the laws were well-known and had been thoroughly enforced; *if* no children or larrikins habitually persecuted birds out of sheer callous stupidity; *if*, in short, wisdom and humanity reigned on every side, there would be no need of the Board of Agriculture to teach the rural world. The boot would be on the other foot.

Sparrow Clubs.

THE Countess of Warwick, in an article in the *Daily Chronicle* (May 30), writes: "It has been suggested that children should take the nests and young of sparrows. Now the house sparrow, the only bird against which the agriculturist brings serious charges, builds as a rule out of the reach of children. But the delightful hedge-sparrow, which, of course, is not a true sparrow at all, builds in the lanes and by-ways, and the misguided zeal of the sparrow club organisers will sacrifice countless eggs and young of the insect-eating birds that are our best friends. In this way the interests of the country suffer.

"Quite apart from this aspect of the question there is another of very wide importance. There is in many children an

instinct towards cruelty that can be eradicated quite successfully by careful treatment, and can be developed to a hideous extent by the neglect of parents and guardians to enforce John Ruskin's famous maxim that he who is not actively kind is cruel. What can we hope for from children who are taught that it is their duty to catch sparrows or take the fledglings from their nests and destroy them in any ugly fashion they like?

"Cruelty is a fearful disease to plant in a child. If it is perfectly clear and beyond the possibility of doubt that sparrows are harmful to man and must be kept in check, let the necessary steps be taken by people old enough to know what they are doing and humane enough to do it in the quickest and most effective fashion; in any case let nothing be done in the sight of children."

Birds in the War Area.

THE following notes on bird-life in a corner of France come to *Bird Notes and News* from the Headmaster of the Leicester-road Council School, Bedworth, forming part of a letter to him in the early spring of 1917 from a soldier-teacher now in the Royal Engineers.

"The spot where I am is a splendid stretch of country for nature study, but unfortunately I get no time to indulge in this as I should like. Nevertheless, when I do get the opportunity I don't go about with my eyes shut. Magpies are among the most common birds in these parts and are not nearly so shy as at home. Another member of the crow family, but hitherto unknown to me, I have often seen in the coastal regions, feeding on some yellow berries (like holly) of a stunted shrub (like gorse) growing on the sandhills. This bird is a trifle larger than the crow, with a slate coloured body and black head, tail, and wings. Our familiar "Wet-bird" I often saw and heard in a neighbouring copse previous to the hard frosts. The Owl I heard at times when I first came here with our advanced party, but owing to later developments he seems to have deserted us. The Yellow Bunting can always be seen along the hedgerow and the Lark on the ploughlands of the sugar-beet.

"Our friend the Chaffinch comes to the cook-house door daily for any odd scraps which happen to be overlooked. I saw a male bird to-day tugging away for several minutes at a piece of bacon-rind that had one end frozen to the ground. He worked round and round it, clearing the snow as he went, till he met with success. I often watch the Blue Tit in his performances in three young birch trees at the back of my iron hut; he also comes in for a good many bits of fat. Naturally, the birds and especially the smaller varieties, have had a very rough time during the very severe weather. This is specially the case with the Robin, who seems to have become so weakened by the cold that he scarcely moves out of your way along the roadside, and in more than one instance has been picked up—let us hope by a friend. The birds which do visit our unnatural habitation

are, I am happy to say, bound to get a regular good feed off the morsels of food which chance to be dropped.

"The other evening, when returning ("home" I was going to say) at dusk past a large stretch of flooded land then covered thick with ice—except where a fresh water spring emptied itself, and which therefore was at this part not frozen—I noticed large flocks of Wild Duck settling down for the night among the reeds. It was a grand sight to see them and watch their numbers steadily increasing by flights of ten or a dozen coming over from afar and at a great height in angular formation, and dropping down in spiral formation to join their kith and kin. Then, now and again, with any slight disturbance, they would take to wing in large bodies and travel low across the ice-bound haunt to the far side. On approaching I espied a pair of Herons quite near the other wild fowl, but distinctly separated from them. Fine specimens they were, too. Starlings are regular visitors to the dumps of sugar-beet waste from manufacture to be found in the corners of the fields (fields without our familiar hedgerows) and used, I understand, for manuring the land."

ON THE BALKAN MARSHES.

The birds of the eastern front have been written of less than have those of the west; partly perhaps because they are less familiar to the British soldier. This interesting account of some of them appeared in the *Balkan News*, and was sent by a soldier serving in Salonika to Mr. Vicars Webb:

"What a paradise for the student of natural history is this apparently so desolate expanse of plain and mountain, but especially for the observer of birds! Every change in the wind brings us the trumpeting of vast hordes of Grey Lag-Geese echeloning in flight against the morning sky. The variety of wild fowl approaches the teeming swarms of the Danube marshes, and but for the ceaseless depredations of the numerous Eagles, Buzzards, Falcons, and Harriers, observation would yield even better results.

Mallard, Widgeon (slightly larger and darker than the British species), Goldeneye,

Teal, Pochard, and Tree-duck are common, also two ducks which I cannot identify. Size slightly less than the Shoveller, ruddy brown, tufted head in the male, sooty grey plumage and flamingo pink on the underside of the wings; female, no crest and rusty brown plumage. The distinctive feature of the male is a bright vermilion and serrated bill, which is drab colour in the female.

Another bird which puzzles me is slightly larger than the Teal: a fish-eater with a Merganser's bill; the male is a beautifully marked white bird with characteristic black bars round the base of the neck and a typically harlequin crest; the female has no crest, but a ruddy brown head and neck. It has duck's plumage and is not a Grebe. Is there such a small Merganser? The common Merganser is a daily visitor to the lake, as is also the Dabchick.

In the cultivated valleys the Common Partridge and French Partridge abound. Blue Rock Pigeons are plentiful. Wood-pigeons are rarely seen. Woodcocks come in with the north wind in considerable numbers.

The Black Vulture is seen frequently in the vicinity of old camping grounds, besides the Golden Eagle and Bonelli's Eagle. Montagu Harriers are common, as well as Marsh and Glen Harriers: Peregrine Falcons are comparatively scarce; Buzzards take heavy toll of Mallards at dawn and dusk. The Great White Heron, the Squacco, the Night and Grey Herons, the white Egret, and Bittern are found in all the Doiran marshes; Cormorants and Shags are familiar denizens of the waterways and have as companion one little Kingfisher.

On ploughed land the Calandra Lark is frequently seen, with a black-throated Tree Lark; and all our English finches are represented. Of soft-billed birds, Robins, Blackbirds, and Song-Thrushes inhabit all sheltered spots, whilst the ravines are peopled with Dippers, Grey and Yellow Wagtails, and the interesting Sedge Warblers and Bearded Tits.

Perhaps no list would be complete without reference to our useful scavenging bird friends, which include Magpies, Jackdaws,

Rooks, Carrion and Hoodie Crows, and Ravens. Every oak ravaged by borer-worms or weather acts as host to a whole tribe of Little Owls. I counted thirty-two fly out of a tree in a wood near the lake. Screech and long-eared Owls are the constant companions of our night-posts. Of lesser birds of prey the Kestrel, Hobby, and Sparrowhawk, and of medium size the Kite, are perhaps worthy of mention; whilst the smallest and most mischievous is the Great Grey Shrike—familiar figure on telegraph post or tamarisk bush.

It is remarkable how little all our feathered friends—who help to make our life so much more endurable up here—are affected even by the barrage fire or artillery. They re-occupy their usual haunts quite calmly as soon as the fire lifts."

FROM MACEDONIA.

From Macedonia "I.C.B." writes to the *Scotsman*: "Soon the storks will be building and occupying their great nests on cottage chimney tops, stunted trees, and elsewhere. By the month of May, the first blue birds, which are about the size of jays, make their appearance—their vivid colours showing to perfection among the green leaves of the trees. The shy hoopoe, too, with its crested head and chequered colours—of buff and grey—is often to be met with by June, flying about in lonely, especially deserted hamlets and unfrequented parts. The dipper, water blackbird, or ousel, is often to be seen on a rock in the bed of a stream or running about under the water, looking for its insect food. On a branch a foot or two above the stream, the weaver bird builds its nest, which is made of the blossom of a species of willow and has the texture of thick, closely woven felt. By July the nests of the bee-eater can be seen, or at least the holes in the banks of streams in which the nests are built. These birds are about the size of a starling, but when flying high in the air their flight is so light and graceful that they might easily be mistaken for swallows. The bill is black, but the head of a fine bronze colour; the body green and blue, and the wings light brown, tipped with green."

The Breeding Range of Birds.

READERS of *Bird Notes and News* will remember that in his latest work, "Adventures among Birds," Mr. W. H. Hudson expresses the opinion that if Nightingales should be more fully protected they would probably extend their range in England.

"That man's persecution tells seriously on the species may be seen from what has happened on the Continent, even in countries where the hateful custom of eating nightingales with all small birds is unknown, but where it is greatly sought after as a cage-bird. Thus in Southern Germany the nightingales have been decreasing for very many years and are now generally rare and have been wholly extirpated in many parts. With us, too, the drain on the species has been too heavy; it is, or has been, a double drain—that of bird-nesting boys and of the birdcatchers. . . .

"The bird is exceedingly reluctant to leave his home, but if the annual increase was greater, a third greater let us say, more and more birds would be compelled to go further afield."

Commenting on this, Mr. Henry Oldys, the well-known American ornithologist, writes that what Mr. Hudson predicts of Nightingales in England has occurred in the case of several species in America

"The Mocking-bird and Cardinal (*Cardinalis cardinalis*) were once extensively trapped for the cage trade. Nuttall tells of one shipment of 1800 Cardinals disposed of readily in Havana. 'We have changed all that,' and the two species have been permitted to increase naturally. Both are of the kind of birds that thrive readily under conditions of greater settlement of the

country, as they nest freely about the homestead. Hence we should naturally look for an increase in their numbers. But instead of showing a thickening in the normal region, each species has displayed a marked tendency to extend its range. The Cardinal has changed from 'rare' to 'common' in northern Illinois and other parts of the northern border of its range; and the Mocking-bird has become common in the vicinity of Washington, D.C., where I formerly noted one about every five years.

"Similarly with the so-called American Robin (*Merula migratoria*), which is the counterpart in size and shape of your Blackbird. The breeding range of the Robin extends from a short distance north of the Gulf Coast as far toward the Pole as trees are found—and the tree-belt of Canada touches the Arctic Ocean in two places. In the Northern States the bird is revered as a cheery harbinger of spring, as a bright and sometimes beautiful singer, and as a very friendly fellow. In the Southern States, where he swarms in winter, where he is silent (or nearly so), where he heralds nothing, swings no cradle, and avoids his human neighbours, the chief liking that attaches to him is gustatory not sentimental, and the bird is very much sought as a toothsome ingredient of 'pot-pie.' But the northern friends of the bird have arisen in protest and a campaign of education has softened the southern heart or, at least, by means of new laws, restrained the southern hand. No longer do tales of the slaughter of millions of Robins in the south float northward. . . . Instead, millions of live Robins, additional to the normal number, spread themselves over the land. Formerly an abundant migrant but rare winter and summer resident in my neighbourhood (8 miles north of Washington, D.C.), it is now abundant in spring, summer and autumn, and fairly so in winter."

Wild-life Protection in Russia.

IN continuation of his interesting letter, published in the Spring Number of *Bird Notes and News*, M. Boris Zakharoff writes from Kharkow to say that in addition to the Nature-Reserves he then mentioned, the Imperial University of Kharkow possesses a reserve (forest-land) which is situated in one of the most picturesque localities in the south of Russia.

"Near the town of Vladivostok on the Pacific Coast, there is a large private reserve for a species of deer (*Cervus Dybolskii*), where there are 300 head of those animals, which are very numerous in the region but are much destroyed because their antlers are used in Chinese medicine.

"The reserves are organised in Siberia for the Zibelines, but as hunting is therefore prohibited other species of fauna find a refuge there.

"Near the town of Kasagne there is a Mahometan Cemetery; in that part of Russia the population is a mixture of Russians and of Tartars, the latter being Mahometans. No one visits that place because of the religious beliefs of the Tartars ;

as a result a colony of Herons, almost unique in that district, exists there. The other heronries have been almost entirely destroyed by hunters."

M. Zakharoff adds that he sends the Society three brochures on the protection of Nature, issued by the Society of the Friends of Nature at Kharkow; but unfortunately they have not reached England. One of these, by M. George Brisgualine, deals with "The Winter Feeding of Useful Birds: "

"In the spring M. Brisgualine and I decided to place a quantity of nesting-boxes in the Jardin des Plantes of Kharkow and in some other gardens in the town.

"The question of Bird-Protection interests me much, but, to my regret there is in the Russian literature no good book on the subject, and until the war all the sciences drew on German books. In general the protection of Nature is a new thing in Russia. For some years the Society of the Friends of Nature has organized a Nature Exhibition, which has been a great success and has been repeated with equal success at Kieff."

In an English Bird Reserve.

It will not be difficult for readers to identify the nature-reserve indicated in the following description, and many will perhaps recognize also the initials of the writer who kindly sends it:—

"We hear the Wryneck, and by a cottage-gate admire a family party of Goldfinches. A Yellow Wagtail calls overhead as we walk along the peaty drove which runs by the main lode, with its charming under-water garden. The pools in the fen are crowded with white water-lilies, and the marsh red-rattle shows up here and there as the wind plays on the clumps of bulrush, reed and sedge. A Snipe is standing on the stile, and near by are the broken eggs that have been hatched. A pair of Redshanks greet us with a subdued rendering of their nest-time charm. We have seen another pair also, as well as a Curlew. There is a Red-backed Shrike on sentry-go above the blooms of the water-elder, and the Whinchats

draw our attention from listening to the reeling of at least four Grasshopper Warblers and the song of a Redpoll. Reed Buntings and Sedge Warblers are plentiful, and there are four pairs of Reed-Warblers. The Lesser Whitethroat is jingling ag in, and we see the Corn Bunting and watch the Little Owl go into its retreat in an ivy-clad ash. But the chief care of the Watcher are the "large Hawks" which are nesting. There is no need to name them more precisely. The Watcher needs a pair of good field-glasses to spot the persistent and deadly clutch-hunters who come—on Sundays especially—to try and rob him of his charge. . . . It has been a delightful ramble to end our rest and change from National Service. In our comfortable lodgings we fall asleep to the noises of young Tawny Owls, with kindly feeling towards the unspoiled, religious-minded people who live in Hereward's country —W. A. S."

The Royal Society for the Protection of Birds.

COUNCIL MEETING.

THE Council's Quarterly Meeting was held at the Middlesex Guildhall, S.W., on April 13th, 1917, when there were present: Mr. Meade-Waldo, in the Chair (in the unavoidable absence of Mr. Montagu Sharpe, Chairman), Mr. Bell, Miss Clifton, Dr. Drewitt, Hon. Mrs. Drewitt, Hon. Mrs. Henniker, Mr. Lemon (Hon. Sec.), Miss Pollock, and the Secretary (Miss Gardiner).

Hon. Secretary's Report.

The Hon. Secretary reported the holding of the Annual Meeting and preparation of the Annual Report; the nomination of Brigadier-General Page-Croft, M.P., as a Member of the Council; seven lectures given by Rev. J. G. Tuck, Miss Hamilton, Mr. Frisby, Miss M. Twemlow, Mr. Vicars Webb, and Rev. J. E. Kelsall; fourteen Bird and Tree Festivals; arrangement for an Essay Competition at Stockton Grammar School; publication of the new Leaflet "Birds, Insects, and Crops"; and the issue of Bird Protection Orders for Cheshire (renewal), the Scottish counties (renewal for three years from 1917), and Galway (renewal).

Finance and General Purposes Committee.

The Committee presented the financial statement for the first quarter of 1917, and reported the receipt of a legacy of £20 under the will of the late Miss A. G. Christie, and also a communication from the lawyers of the late Mrs. Edith Scott, stating that the Court had pronounced in favour of the will and codicil by which £300 was bequeathed by Mrs. Scott to the Society. The death

was announced with regret of Mr. W. S. Mainprice, a Life Member of the Society and Hon. Local Secretary for Knutsford. The following Fellows and Members were elected:

FELLOWS: T. Edwin Harvey (London, E.C.); H. Ridgers (London, E.C.); J. A. Whitehead (Richmond).

MEMBERS: Mrs. Allerton (Bournemouth); Stanley Austin (London, N.); Lieut. Eastwick-Field, R.N. (Emsworth); H. Footner (Branksome Park, Dorset); John Gregson (Heskin); Jack Odell (Wimbledon); Miss Osborn (Shefford); Mrs. Reeve (Kingswear); W. Ransom (Upper Norwood, S.E.); J. Riley (Stoke-on-Trent); Miss Edith Schiassi (London, N.W.); Miss N. J. Simmons (London, N.W.); Miss A. F. Smith (London, N.); W. W. Strang (Keswick); C. G. Webb-Peploe (Parkstone); H. P. Wilkes (Weymouth).

General Business.

The Standing Committees (Watchers, Publications, and Finance and General Purposes) were appointed for the year. Recent edicts with regard to the Plumage Trade; the action of the Society in regard to the collection of sea-birds' eggs for food; and numerous letters with reference to the destruction of useful birds by "sparrow" clubs and the employment of children in killing birds, were discussed, together with the action to be taken by the Society.

Next Meeting of the Council, July 20th.

Mr. Archibald Thorburn has been elected by the Council a Life Fellow of the Society, as a recognition of his generous use of his art for the benefit of the Bird-Protection cause. Mr. Thorburn has given the Society designs for three Greeting-cards (including the Whitethroat card of 1916-17) and also the charming picture which forms a frontispiece to "Our Pet Herons."

THE DESTRUCTION OF BIRDS.

IN connexion with recent publications and recommendations of the Board of Agriculture, a letter has been addressed by the Society to War Agricultural Committees, Agricultural Societies, Food-Production Committees, Local Councils, and other bodies, pointing out the grave effect likely to result to the nation's food-supplies through the unintelligent outcry against bird-life, and offering free supplies of the leaflet "Birds, Insects and Crops." Citing the words of the President of the Board that "The wholesale destruction of birds would be fatal," the letter states :

"The danger of devastation by insect plagues this year is peculiarly great on account of (1) the turning up of so much fresh soil ; (2) the shortage of hand labour to deal with these pests, and expense of chemical insecticides ; (3) the heavy toll of resident insectivorous birds taken by the long and severe winter.

"On the other hand, widespread destruction of valuable birds is certain to follow from (1) the ignorant zeal of new hands in agriculture, who have no knowledge of the work and value of insectivorous and vermin-destroying species ; (2) the ill-considered formation of so-called "Sparrow" Clubs which, for want of proper safeguards and regulations to restrict their operations, cause heedless and indiscriminating slaughter of insect-eating warblers, hedge-sparrows, flycatchers, etc.

"The Council of the Society especially urge that any necessary reduction in the numbers of house-sparrows should be carried out by properly authorised persons, who will take nests and eggs from houses and other buildings, where they most commonly occur ; and that children be on no account allowed to take part, since they ransack hedgerows where house-sparrows do not nest, but where useful insectivorous species build."

A letter has also been addressed to all County and Borough Education Committees in England and Wales, protesting against the suggestion that School children and Teachers should take part in the work of so-called "sparrow" clubs, and pointing out that—

1. The Sparrow Club is in many cases a club for the indiscriminate destruction of all small birds. The attention of the Home Office has just been called by this Society to a Surrey club which promotes the killing of all birds, with but four exceptions, throughout the year. In any case, children have neither the knowledge nor the self-restraint to stay their hands at the destruction of one species.

2. The proposal is a direct incentive to that cruelty and destructiveness latent in children which, during the progress of civilization, Educationists and Teachers have been trying to eradicate.

3. It is futile and mischievous for the purposes for which it is suggested, since children ransack hedgerows, where House-Sparrows do not build.

4. Such a proposal implies infringement of the Bird Protection laws and the illegal and dangerous use of air-guns and catapults.

5. It is incredible that the time of Teachers should be occupied in such a task."

The Council of the Society therefore respectfully urged that what is emphatically needed in schools is not encouragement to boys and girls to destroy birds, nestlings, and eggs, but instruction as to the work and value of Insectivorous Birds, upon which the country depends for the preservation of crops of every kind from disastrous plagues of insects.

Letters have been sent likewise to all the principal newspapers of the country ; and cordial thanks must be offered to the Editors of many leading journals who have not only published these, but have added notes and editorials in support of the Society's plea, and given extensive extracts from the leaflet ; to writers who have contributed special articles to the Press ; to a large number of the clergy and ministers who have circulated the leaflet with parish

magazines and in other ways ; and to many friends of the Society who have given sympathy and practical help in the effort.

"BIRDS, INSECTS AND CROPS."

It will be obvious that the expenses of this attempt to save not only the country's birds but the food of the people, is an expensive one, entailing heavy outlay in printing at a time when paper and labour are at a high figure, and in postages. The leaflet, which is supplied free, is now in its third impression and its 100th thousand ; and the demand cannot be said to have greatly decreased nor, it is to be hoped, will it cease so long as the need for information continues. In gratefully acknowledging therefore the kind donations, big and little, of those who have contributed to the Leaflet Fund, the Council trust that further help both in money and in the work of distribution will be received from those who appreciate our feathered allies and their National Service on the Land.

QUESTIONS IN THE HOUSE.

In the House of Commons, on April 25th, Sir R. Winfrey, in reply to Mr. Chancellor, said the loss of food owing to the depredations of sparrows was so serious that the Board had urged the formation of sparrow-clubs throughout the country ; but they had advised that schoolchildren should not be employed on the destruction of sparrows except under the supervision of their school teachers. The Board had no reason to fear that demoralization to any children working under their teachers would ensue in helping to get rid of the large excess of sparrows.

Sir J. Tudor Walters : Is this intended to be a joke ?—Sir R. Winfrey : Oh, I am quite serious.

Sir H. Craik : Is the subject recognized by the Code ?

Mr. Chancellor : Will there be any great saving by the destruction of sparrows in view of the multiplication of insects on which they feed ?—Sir R. Winfrey : I think

scientific opinion shows that sparrows do more harm than good.

On May 7th, in reply to Sir George Greenwood, the President of the Board of Education stated that the paragraph in the Board of Agriculture's Memorandum relating to the killing of sparrows by schoolchildren was intended to secure that children whose natural proclivities might incline them to take part in the destruction of sparrows did not do so except under competent supervision. This was not school work to be done in school hours.

Mr. Chancellor : Will the right hon. gentleman see that school teachers are not allowed to instruct children to destroy life ?—Mr. Fisher : The educational value attached to the decapitation of sparrows does not, in the mind of the Board of Education, possess any positive value, and accordingly I shall not instruct its inclusion in the curriculum of elementary schools.

HAMPSHIRE FIELD CLUB.

At the Annual Meeting of the Hampshire Field Club and Archæological Society, on May 14th, Sir William Portal, Bart., F.S.A. (past-president), said he hoped the Members of the Club would support those who were endeavouring to arrest the reckless way in which the destruction of small birds was being carried on. House-sparrows were mischievous, and if they could be diminished in some safe way he and others would be glad ; but it was not a safe way for school children to be told to go out and destroy sparrows, and there would be terrible destruction if all over the country children were to go about pulling down all the nests they could find. When, too, an influential paper said the simplest way to destroy sparrows was to provide poisoned grain he thought it was time protest was made. Not only the house-sparrow, but countless other small birds would be poisoned.

A resolution, moved by Miss Minns, and seconded by Dr. Williams-Freeman, expressing the Club's sympathy with the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds in its efforts to oppose the wholesale destruction of insect-eating birds, was unanimously agreed to.

Insect Plagues.

PLAGUES of insects are, as foreseen by nature-students, being continually reported. In the Peak district a host of the caterpillars of the Antler or Grass-moth have been marching in armies of millions over pasture, cornfield, and garden, devouring as they pass. This pest is mentioned in "Birds, Insects, and Crops," p. 5. The Board of Agriculture sent down an inspector to view the ravages; but what the district needs is Birds. An official of the Board, interviewed by one of the papers, says:

"These processionary attacks are very rare in England, and are the nearest approach we get to the devastating march of locusts in other countries. In a short time, we expect, the infested area will be visited by *Starlings*, who will clear off an immense number of pests."

All manner of chemicals, etc., are being suggested: but latest reports say: "Great relief is experienced owing to the fact that large flocks of *Rooks* have appeared and are eating up the pests. This is exactly what occurred on the occasion of the last great plague in 1874. It is suggested that all Rook-shooting should be stopped for two years at least, and that the authorities protect *Starlings* and all other birds found feeding on the caterpillars."

The *Sheffield Telegraph* (June 16), commenting on the report of Mr. H. S. Leigh, Lecturer on Entomology, Manchester University, says: "This fact at least is established, that it is unwise to disturb the balance of nature by killing off large numbers of birds. We had better put up with birds than be devoured by caterpillars."

Ravages of the Turnip-fly are becoming very serious in the East Riding of Yorkshire. Several fields will have to be re-sown.

In Lancashire and Cheshire acres of cornland have had to be replanted because of the ravages of the Wireworm and Whitebot.

In Kent, says the *Daily Telegraph* (June 7) there was promise of a very prolific yield of apples this year. "It is now generally reported that the crops will be below the average, due mainly to the Winter-Moth caterpillar. Large acreages in East and West Kent are practically bare of foliage, and it is understood that in other fruit-

growing counties much the same state of things prevails." One noted grower, it is added, will consider himself lucky if he gathers 2,000 bushels instead of the 15,000 he anticipated. The late E. Newman names the *Bullfinch* and *Tit* as the greatest destroyers of the winter-moth. Warblers and other species help ("Birds, Insects, and Crops" p. 5).

In Bucks rows of peas are being destroyed by the pea-weevil: An allotment-holder at Beaconsfield found his row of exhibition peas reduced to a few withered shoots in a night.

Mr. Robert Morley writes to the *Times* (June 8) from the Dial House, Frensham: "The long and very severe winter led to the death by starvation of countless wild birds: The house sparrow suffered greatly, and the birds died by thousands, as anyone who observes will have noticed. Only the strongest survived. Then came the Order of the Board of Agriculture, taken up by local councils, and the consequent wholesale destruction of those left to breed, the young birds being ruthlessly destroyed in their nests.

"Now as to the result. The season being a favourable one, the fruit blossoms set to such an extent that the prospect of a heavy crop was general. No sooner was the young fruit formed than a plague of caterpillars, such as are taken by the sparrows to feed their young, appeared. These, not content with the leaves, have eaten into the heart of the fruit, and the crop in many orchards is almost destroyed. I enclose specimens from my own orchard to show the nature of the damage done."

To this Mr. G. Bertram Kershaw, F.E.S., responds (June 11):

"It is to be feared that Mr. Robert Morley's letter concerning the havoc wrought by caterpillars on fruit blossom and young fruit comes too late. Immense damage has already been done by various lepidopterous larvæ, *H. Brumata* being, perhaps, the most abundant.

"It seems hardly credible that anyone, with the object lesson of other countries available, should suggest the destruction of birds—even sparrows."

Notes.

WHAT is the matter with the country, or with certain of the powers that be? Is the German spirit catching—not among those who bear the stress and fury of the day, but among those who stay at home at (more or less) ease? It would almost seem as if, falling foul of the old love of the wild that lies deep in the souls of Englishmen, losing the grace of sanity, casting aside all cloak of humanity, they had been let by sudden panic to become Huns-in-little and to resolve to make of the Birds the Belgians of their hysterical wrath,

* * *

First came the halfpenny papers with their screams of "Kill the bird," "Eat the birds"; then the Board of Agriculture with its cry for more and yet more "sparrow" clubs and for the children of the country to act as bird-butchers, and with its messages to War Agricultural Committees to destroy and kill, to evacuate rookeries and pitch the rook-babies to the ground, to seize upon public money to attack creatures which, it would seem, they were assured farmers and others would not kill unless provided with money and guns out of the rates as a bribe for so doing. Next the extension to the end of April of the time for burning gorse and heather, thus catching the larks upon their nests and scaring them with smoke and flame from their blackened homes (happily the late season saved many a bird family from this form of destruction). Finally, strychnine—nominally, like the notorious "sparrow" club, for house-sparrows only. All this, without one word of a Bird Protection Act or a Poisoned Grain Clause in the Protection of Animals Act which are still presumed to be laws of the land.

* * *

Not content with taking a hand in Education, the Board of Agriculture next pokes a devastating finger into the War Office, and requests that our soldiers, who abroad record their interest in and thanks for the birdlife that alleviates some dreary hours, should at home be set to destroying nests and eggs of "sparrows." Result, a picture

in one of the dailies showing two tommies removing a nest—from a *hedge*, where no house-sparrow builds. A correspondent writes to the R.S.P.B.:

"A member of our Naturalists' Society, home on leave from a camp near — said he had seen a notice posted in camp calling on soldiers 'to aid farmers by destroying nests and eggs of sparrows and other harmful birds.' We may imagine the effect of such a notice on a camp of 50,000 townsmen Except that they have learned to suck pheasants' and partridges' eggs, every egg is smashed at sight, and next year that district will be practically birdless." But it will be a good field for the student of insects.

* * *

Possibly the first madness has passed. Mr Prothero has informed the country that the Board of Agriculture does not wish to invite disaster to crops by destroying insectivorous birds. Mr. Fisher, in ironical language clearly betokening the education authority, has assured the House of Commons that he does not consider the educational benefit attaching to the decapitation of sparrows to possess any positive value, "and will accordingly not instruct its inclusion in the curriculum of elementary schools." It would have been still more satisfactory if Mr. Fisher had admitted that tolerance of anything of the kind is wholly impossible in the modern-day school, where nature-study is intended more and more to supersede the mingling of superstition and barbarity of a former age. Both Ministers, it will be noted, seem afraid to allude to humanity as such. It needs a strong man to risk being called sentimental by taking his stand on such a ground, especially when the battle-cry is FOOD.

* * *

"I am afraid," writes a correspondent to the R.S.P.B., "we shall suffer greatly this year from pests, so many birds perished in the long frost. I already see in my garden many signs of coming devastations." Since this was written the complaint of insect-pests has become general. But what

though rooks and their brethren and the smaller insect-eating birds have been decimated "by order," need the market-gardener fear? A writer in the *Times* cheers him with the thought that he can buy nice little cardboard discs to fix neatly round the collar of each cabbage, can walk up and down his rows of turnip, waving tar-covered bags to which the flies will obligingly stick, and can gently uproot small plants, remove the maggots, and replant them in clean ground. These sound idyllic occupations for a superabundance of farm-hands wanting work.

* * *

All over the country, testimony has been borne to the effect of the long hard winter upon bird-life. Thrushes and other insect-eating birds of course suffered most; while Lapwings were picked up in so emaciated a state that they were sold in the London markets at 2d. and 3d. each, and the poor little skeletons were dear at the price. Redwings, Blackbirds, Fieldfares perished in great numbers everywhere. At a meeting of the British Ornithologists Union, Mr. Carruthers Gould spoke of picking up a dead Heron, and flushing a Greater Spotted Woodpecker from a half-frozen ditch where it was sheltering; and Mr. H. B. Booth told how Thrushes, Larks, and Pipits fled from the Yorkshire dales before the sharpest frosts, having apparently some fore-knowledge of the weather.

* * *

Wild birds urgently need water in hot dry weather, and the Food Controller has not yet started fining humane persons for supplying this. A dish, flower-pot saucer, or ornamental trough or bird-fountain, should be in every garden. Empty tin crosses and other receptacles might well be utilised in churchyards and cemeteries. One correspondent writes that he has planted rows of the good old sunflower in order to provide bird-food next winter; another would remind readers that food odds-and-ends, plate and saucepan scrapings, etc., should be collected in a kitchen jar and bestowed on the birds; it is better than blocking the drains, and a member of the household overseeing the business might take the honoured Wykehamist title of "Prefect of Tub."

The doom of the grey North American squirrel has been pronounced by Sir Frederick Treves in the *Observer*, backed by Sir Harry Johnston in the *Weekly Despatch*, and also by Mr. W. H. Hudson in the *Devon and Exeter Gazette*. It is undoubtedly an attractive little creature to the multitude owing to its tameness, and when first liberated in London parks it became a speedy favourite. But unhappily it soon spread to places like Kew Gardens and Richmond Park where our fascinating native red squirrel has its rightful home, and the small native disappeared before the bigger and stronger alien. "Where he establishes himself," writes Mr. Hudson, who found the grey species liberated in the Rougemont Gardens at Exeter, "he exterminates the small wild bird life in the woods and hedges, as he greedily devours the eggs and fledglings and tears down the nests." "It may be a pretty thing to see him taking pea-nuts from the hands of little children," adds Mr. Hudson; and it may be amusing to see him chase off the robins that (in spite of Lord Devonport) try for their expected share of visitors' crumbs in the Park; but his misdemeanours among bird and plant life, as well as his mastery of his daintier cousin, have brought upon him notice to quit.

* * *

A grievous loss has befallen the Society in the tragic death of Mr. Jesse Hawkings of Brean Down Farm, from whom were rented the shooting rights of the Down and who acted as chief Watcher of that most interesting sanctuary. Mr. Hawkings, one of the finest representatives of the British farmer, alike in physique, in expert and general knowledge, and in genial courtesy, was a member of various agriculture and other bodies, and was known and respected throughout Somerset. He was killed on June 10th by one of his own bulls, a pedigree beast recently bought from Lord Rothschild's stock. The animal has since been shot. Mr. Hawkings' two eldest sons, both of whom had assisted in watching and protecting the birds of the Down, are in the Army. The most friendly feeling has subsisted between the Council of the Society and the occupants of Brean Down Farm, and every visitor to the reserve will grieve to hear of the terrible occurrence.

A Pigeon Story.

ABOVE the well-known initials "A. T.-B.," a charming story of a pair of Blue Rock Pigeons is told in the *Hants and Sussex News* (May 2nd, 1917). Blue Rocks, the wild ancestors of our domestic pigeons, are rare to-day in Britain save in a few sea-coast caves, and can rarely be domiciled in the dove-cote; but these two came of a semi-domesticated stock, and nested last March near the roof of an old barn. In the bitter weather of March it seemed hardly likely that their nesting labours would come to anything, and though both birds sat for a time, presently both were seen off the nest together and it was supposed they had given up a bad job; they were fed as usual, but on Palm Sunday disappeared and have not been seen again. But two days later, while the snow lay thick on the ground, a Blue Rock Pigeon suddenly appeared near the aviary—a young bird, perfect in feathering, but with the yellow down still upon his head; while a second youngster had

contrived to squeeze his way inside the aviary, where some Modena Pigeons were cooing.

In spite of frost and snow, the young had been reared. The old birds—which need at least a double allowance of food while they are engaged in providing "pigeon's milk" for their babies, had had but the usual allowance rations—war-time rations too—because no one knew of their family cares; yet they had fed their young devotedly from their own crops, starving themselves in so doing, "and it was not until that day came when their full-grown young, being able to fly, were judged able to fend for themselves, that they at last took wing for some more hospitable home where at least they could get enough to eat." The two rations, they may have reflected (though Mr. Trevor-Battye does not attribute such reasoning to them), would suffice for the children, if father and mother be took themselves elsewhere.

Bird and Tree Essay Competition.

THE Essays for the various Challenge Shield Competitions in Elementary Schools should, where convenient, be written before the School breaks up for the summer holiday. Where the writing of them is postponed until after the holiday, the Secretary of the Society asks for notice of the postponement. The papers and forms will be sent out by July 20th, but notice should be given if they are desired early in the month.

Teams are reminded that a special Prize or Prizes will be given to the Cadets giving the best account of a Bird or Birds of the Garden (home or school) in relation to insects, saying what food the bird or birds found there and what was fed to the nestlings. If preferred this can be sent as a short separate paper, not necessarily referring to the Bird selected for the Essay.

Schools entered well this spring in spite of the difficulties of the time, and a number of new Teams will, it is hoped, send in work. In some cases the Teacher has been called up for service since the last competition, with the result, unfortunately in several

instances, that the School falls out this year. This is so with Newburgh C.E. School, holder for two years of the Lancashire Challenge Shield. Mr. Henry Halton, headmaster, is now serving his country, and the Team feel they cannot do their school credit without his guidance. Many Teams lose leading members when summer claims the work of older boys and girls in the fields. Will Teachers and the Cadets themselves remember that children who have attended school for any part of the school year are eligible to write essays for the Competition?

Empire Day was a great day for Bird-and-Tree Festivals, and numerous celebrations were held on other days of May. In almost every case a programme of appropriate songs and recitations was well given by the children, and the prizes were presented by a member of some resident county family interested in the well-being of the school and in the happiness of the scholars. Schools which have not yet claimed their essays and medals should write to the Secretary of the R.S.P.B.

Birds, Insects and Crops.

AN entire number of *Bird Notes and News* could be filled with extracts from letters received, and newspaper articles written in sympathy with the Society's effort. A few extracts must suffice, but it must be added that practically every class of the community has been represented, including soldiers in service abroad and in hospital

"The war against wild birds which is being urged in many quarters is as reckless and ignorant as it is brutal. . . . The great majority of the birds of the British Isles are largely, and majority are wholly, insectivorous. They destroy the insects which are the chief foes of our grain and our green food. . . . If it is pursued the result is sure to be heavy damage to our food supply."—*Saturday Review*.

"The utter ineptitude of many of the suggestions for destruction are obvious to every one with even a rudimentary knowledge of natural history. To reduce sparrows where their numbers have become excessive is a perfectly simple matter if the right means are adopted; to incite school children to prey upon birds' nests is little short of criminal, and fails altogether in its object."—*Yorkshire Weekly Post*.

"So-called sparrow clubs are generally devised in village taprooms to revive the old cruel game. The S.P.C.A., if not the S.P.C.C., should swell the chorus of protest."—*Globe*.

"It is difficult at any time to over-estimate the true value of insectivorous birds in the economy of Nature. . . . The Royal Society for the Protection of Birds has affirmed the necessity of preserving wild birds in the interests of the nation's food, and a most informative leaflet, issued by the society, is available to all who desire reliable facts."—*Nottingham Guardian*.

"To what a pass we have come that children are to be encouraged in acts of cruelty in the name of economy! Lord Rhondda and Mr. Prothero had better take heed that their campaign of slaughter is not based on ignorance and prejudice"—*Welsh Gazette*.

"We agree with the Bishop of Swansea

that it is not a wholesome thing for Education Committees to become bodies for inciting children to act as sparrow-executioners."—*Brecon and Radnor Express*.

"As a fruitgrower I know the value of birds and should like a supply of your leaflets to distribute."

"I am a very keen gardener, and have cultivated a large garden for some six years, growing amongst other things, raspberries, cherries, and peas, of each of which the birds are very fond. I have, however, always encouraged birds because I believe they are good insect-destroyers, and I have not suffered damage to my crops as I protect those liable to attack."

"As a keen amateur gardener and also as an ornithologist, I entirely concur with your letter and am of opinion it would do a great deal of good if circulated to all Elementary Schoolmasters."

"I took your leaflet to a friend who represents the Agricultural Council in this district, and who promises to send twelve to leading farmers, with a personal note to each suggesting a letter to their M.P.s and also to the Board of Agriculture, to protest against the indiscriminate destruction of useful birds which will inevitably result from the handing over of such a matter to schoolchildren. The leaflet is badly needed everywhere."

"I have read with much thought your letter in the *Schoolmaster*, and I fully endorse your opinion that great care ought to be taken in advocating the killing of *any* bird."

"Your letter is most opportune and deserving of most serious consideration."

"The boys here are keenly interested in birds, and I am anxious to check their destructive energies. I believe that knowledge is the best aid in this work, and this is supplied in an excellent form in your leaflet."

"The leaflet supplies me with just the information I wanted, and I intend giving a series of lessons to the upper Standards in my school in connection with their nature-study course."

"As a farmer and a Parish Councillor I shall be very glad to distribute 100 of your leaflets."

"Please send me 600 to circulate with my Parish Magazine. It is just what is wanted."

"Hope the leaflet may stop the uncalled for shout just now of 'Kill everything'."

"After thirty years' residence in villages in three counties, I rejoice at your letter in the *Chronicle*."

"Information of this kind is greatly needed in this village, where birds are looked on as enemies."

"I gave one of the leaflets to my gardener, who was much interested and begged for six more which he said he could place well. It is important just now to show facts."

"The head teacher of the school here is going to read the paper to the scholars, and I hope all other teachers will do the same."

"To me as a bird-lover the spring is rendered horrible by the daily barbarisms committed in every hedgerow. Only last year a robin's nest was found, and the nestlings had been killed by being stuck with pins."

IN THE COURTS.

THE BIRD-FANCIERS' "AVIARY."—At *Southport*, on April 30th, William Wright, a fisherman, was fined 40s. and costs for cruelty to Larks and Blackbirds. The birds were kept in a species of aviary, improperly fed, and in a horrible state of filth. There were sixty-one bodies of dead birds on the floor.

TEACHING BIRDS TO SING.—At *Doncaster*, on March 24th, Walter Worrals, a miner, was charged with having a Kestrel, newly taken, in his possession. Defendant was out with five decoy birds, pegs, and lime for catching birds, and the kestrel had its wings fastened and appeared to be in great pain. He said he trained birds for singing-contests by taking the cages out where wild birds were singing, and that the kestrel came for them, so that he knocked it over to protect them. The Chairman asked if bird-lime was required to teach birds to sing. Let off with the payment of costs.

BIRDCATCHING.—At *Kingston-on-Thames*, on May 24th, George Johnson, of Bethnal Green, and Joseph Baker, of Shoreditch, were fined 10s. each for using lime and call-birds at Walton. They had twenty-four Chaffinches in a small cage, three of them dead. Decoys and apparatus were confiscated, though one man pleaded that his bird was worth £3 to him. Fred. Buck, of Shoreditch, and Abel Staples, of Kingsland Road, were also fined 10s. each, and their apparatus confiscated. They said they were only having a bit of sport.

KILLING A WILD DUCK.—At *Epping*, on June 1st, Wm. Samuel, of Nazeing, was fined 5s., for killing a Mallard. He was on Nazeing Common with a lurcher dog, and had the bird concealed under his coat.

FEEDING THE BIRDS.—At *Woking*, on June 9th, Sophia Stuart, an elderly woman, was fined £2 for giving bread to wild birds. Mrs. Stuart, who said she was an American, and had lost her only son in Mesopotamia, stated that all she used was the dirty bottom crusts she could not eat. She had fed the birds for seventy years and should continue to do so.

Save the Food-crops.

Save our Bird Allies.

BIRDS, INSECTS & CROPS:

A War-time Leaflet for all Growers
of the Nation's Food Supplies.

Write for copies to the Secretary, Royal Society for the Protection of Birds, 23, Queen Anne's Gate, S.W. 1.

Also published by the Society: "OUR ALLY THE BIRD," Illustrated Leaflet, 9d. per dozen; "FARM, GARDEN, AND BIRDS": How to protect crops without destruction of Bird-life; price Sixpence.

BIRD NOTES AND NEWS (issued quarterly) will be sent post free to any address for 1s. per annum, payable in advance; single numbers, 3d.

To Members of the Society subscribing 5s. and upwards per annum it is forwarded gratis and post free.

Printed by WITHERBY & Co., 326, High Holborn, W.C.1., and published by the ROYAL SOCIETY FOR THE PROTECTION OF BIRDS 23, Queen Anne's Gate, S.W.1.

Bird Notes & News

ISSUED QUARTERLY BY THE ROYAL SOCIETY
:: FOR THE PROTECTION OF BIRDS ::

Vol. VII.]

AUTUMN, 1917.

[No. 7.]

Winter and the Birds.

THE winter of 1917-18 must necessarily be an anxious time, not only for lovers of birds but also for all who are acquainted with the extreme value of birds in agriculture. The long and bitter winter of 1916-17 thinned down the numbers of many species deplorably and disastrously; with the result that never has there been more complaint of wireworm and other destructive grubs, of flies, and of insect-pests of all kinds than during the past summer, when the fruits of the earth were of such infinite consequence to the nation. The heavy rains swept away clouds of winged insects, but the farmer paid heavily for this relief. Chemical sprays proved doubtfully effective and are stated to have led to many cases of illness, one fatal case at least being medically attributed to chemically poisoned plums. Altogether, a good many lessons as to the need for Birdlife have been taught this summer; and no man in his senses could view with anything but dismay the prospect of a similar decimation of wild birds in the coming season. To the bird-lover the loss has been even more saddening, because so many charming species—Tits (especially Longtailed), Stonechat, Linnet, Goldcrest, the resident Warblers, Thrushes, Wagtails, etc.—almost disappeared in many districts. But for the inrush of summer migrants the emptiness of woodland and garden would have been far more striking.

What can be done to help the birds this winter, whether it be long or short? With what can they be fed, in view of necessary economy of the national food-supply and of the Food Controller's orders?

In the first place, *their natural food must be left* to them in field and hedgerow. There should be no filching of wild berries: holly, ivy, mountain-ash, guelder-rose, dogwood, yew, spindle-tree, whitebeam, hips, and

haws, should all be scrupulously left to afford meat in due season for the wild folk. None of these should be cut back to destroy the ripening fruit; nor should garden shrubs which afford food be dismantled or ruthlessly pruned. If any doubt remains as to whether some berry or other is eaten by birds, the only safe plan is to leave it alone and watch. As to holly, no question now remains; its berries may save the life of many thrushes in winter's hardest time, and in house or church mournfully represent the life-blood of little birds dying out in the hungry wild. Bird-lovers have in some cases been mindful to plant in their gardens giant sunflowers and other reservoirs of succulent food; rose-hips, especially well-known varieties with large fruit, are valuable; and if gardeners can hardly be asked to spare the weeds they can at least store many of the seeding plants for seed-eaters' delectation in times of need.

Out in the open country comparatively little can be done beyond leaving nature's foods alone; and householders feel a good deal of alarm about giving so much as a crumb to the Robin, since the Food Controller is understood to prohibit the use for bird or beast of any food of man.

The precise legal restraint is that imposed by the Wheat, Rye, and Rice Order, as follows—

"No person shall use any wheat or rye except for the purpose of seed or except in the purpose of manufacturing flour. . . . No person shall use any wheaten flour, rye flour, rice or rice flour, except in the manufacture of articles suitable for human food, or use any article containing any wheaten flour, rye flour, rice or rice flour except as human food."

"Wheaten flour" includes any flour partly obtained from wheat, such as that used for baker's bread.

This leaves a very fair abundance of material at hand, without infringing either letter or spirit of the restrictions. There are always scraps of meat, fat, porridge, and general "leavings" from every breakfast and dinner-table. Potato-skins (especially if the potatoes are baked in their jackets) and scraps of meat and cheese can be used; apple and other parings, and damaged fruit, chopped up small and mixed with nut-suet and seed, make a good dish; and many variations will suggest themselves to any housekeeper who thinks about it. Coco-nuts and some other nuts can still be had, but should be bought as soon as possible; nut-foods and waste from the suet so largely used in bottling fruit, will render many a mixture tasty for hungry birds.

Another source of supply is suggested by the special war-time dog-biscuits made by well-known firms; and a substitute for oats supplied for forage by another firm consists of an admixture of various grains which corn- and seed-loving birds would welcome.

Bird-seeds have risen greatly in price, but they are still procurable—canary-seed, hemp, linseed, and mixed assortments to be had by bag, bushel, peck, or cwt.—while bird-food specialists have numerous additional foods, mealworms, etc., provided for aviaries. These things all cost more, it is true, than in normal times; but whatever may be felt as to the outlay over caged birds, which are at best a luxury only, there need be no hesitation in expending a few more pence in feeding the wild birds, for they give back in spring and summer both principal and interest, by their untiring guardianship of our food-crops from insect-plague, and by the charm of movement, form, and song that medicines the spirit.

All bird-food should be placed carefully out of reach of cats. Hanging baskets and string-bags, coconuts, bird-tables and trays, etc., are desirable. Most of these are easily constructed, or can be had from the R.S.P.B. and elsewhere. In frosty times, water should always be provided as well as food.

Birds in the War Area.

RANDOM NOTES FROM FRANCE AND BELGIUM.

SECOND-LIEUT. C. C. BARING sends the following diary of bird notes from the western front. It will be remembered that two or three years ago Mr. Baring took the Society's Silver Medal in the Public Schools Competition.

April.—Out in rest at last, after an "over the top with the best of luck."

11th.—The first Swallow has turned up, and in the lane behind the farm we are billeted in is a Blackbird's nest with one egg.

23rd.—The House-Martins, Chiffchaffs, and a few Willow-Wrens are here.

26th.—This afternoon I watched a small Warbler hopping about in the creeper outside the farmhouse. From its note and general appearance I am convinced it was an Icterine Warbler.

28th.—To-day I saw a fine cock Wheatear; it was probably still on migration.

May 5th.—This morning I put up a hen Meadow Pipit from her nest, while doubling

across a field on "open warfare" manoeuvres. It had five eggs in.

7th.—All the Magpie and Carrion Crows' nests which I have found so far in at all accessible positions have been robbed. The Meadow Pipit has deserted, I am sorry to say. There are five or six Sandpipers passing up and down the river here. They are very shy and I have not been able to get a good look at them. I am almost sure they are not Common Sandpipers, as their note seems to me quite different. Along the same river there are a number of small bushes in which several pairs of Whitethroats have begun to build their nests. If one is lucky one can see a Kingfisher flash by in all the glory of its breeding-season plumage.

8th.—I have located the Kingfisher's home quite by chance. I put the hen bird off the nest of fish-bones, on which reposed seven pearly white eggs. She was just beginning to sit, and the eggs had lost the beautiful pink glow that suffuses them when newly laid. I found nests of the Robin, Yellow-

hammer, Hedge-Sparrow, Wren, Linnet, and Garden-Warbler containing eggs; Nightingales are fairly plentiful in suitable spots, but I have found no nest as yet.

June.—An end to rest and peace; we have moved up to the ill-fated "Salient." We are in a once-famous town, now sadly smashed about. There is a fine tower still left standing. At least five pairs of Kestrels nest in it, besides Jackdaws, Pigeons, and Starlings, so there is everlasting war in the air round it; how they all fit in together I can't think. The air seems full of screaming Swifts. They don't seem to mind the tower being shelled, but rejoice in the additional nesting-places the ruins afford. Last night on patrol I ran into a flock of Redshanks in "No man's land," which is a marsh in this part of the line. Fortunately for us they did not scream out and only displayed a certain vague restlessness. One full-throated alarm call, and we should have had a dozen Hun lights at us.—We are in a place where the front line is in the middle of a wood, now a mere ghost of itself. But a pair of Nightingales still haunt it, and Chaffinches, Hedge-Sparrows, Blackbirds, and Whitethroats are singing everywhere.

Last night I heard a Great Reed-Warbler singing beside a lake I had to pass. Its song dominated the whole night as the Nightingale's does, but of course it is not quite so melodious.

This morning I had a most delightful adventure. I stumbled across a ruined *châlet* surrounded by most beautiful grounds, which were full of syringa bushes in full bloom, while Golden Orioles called from the tall trees or flashed by in the sunshine.

Later.—We are in the middle of the offensive, the shelling is almost incessant, and there is very little cover. Naturally there are not many birds up here now. I have seen several Sparrows suffering from "shell shock." A most beautiful cock Pied Wagtail haunts a large shell-hole full of water near one of my posts. Besides these a few Swifts and Swallows occasionally come over.

July.—I am far away from the battle on a course. I have discovered a pleasant little wood. In it I have found a nest full of young Carrion Crows, several nests of Blackcap and Garden Warblers with young

nearly ready to fly, and eight different species of orchis.—To-day I saw several Wheatears; they must have nested here. I also discovered a Partridge's nest with twelve eggs.—To-day, in manoeuvres, I found four Partridge's nests. A Tank missed one of them only by inches! They are nesting very late this year.

August.—During August I was too busy to make any observations beyond the following—

3rd.—Saw several large flocks of Starlings, rather an early date for really large flocks to be found.

25th.—Yesterday I passed by a lake where there were still quite a number of Great Reed-Warblers about.

NIGHTINGALES IN THE BALKANS.

Mr. J. C. Richardson (Mem. Faraday Society, M.M.P.) writes to the *Times* (July 28, 1917)—

"The Balkan News to-day (June 22) prints an article, or portions of it, of yours on 'English Woods and Shakespeare.' And in the course of it the writer says in May-time the poet had often heard the 'nightingale's complaining note.' And so have we out here heard 'the nightingale's complaining note,' but more often his joyful notes, under conditions which are worth recording. You will have a terrific tearing and roaring noise of artillery and shot in the dead of night; then there will be a temporary cessation of the duel, with great quietness, when, lo! and behold, and hear! Harken to his song! Out come the nightingales, right about the guns, perched sometimes only a few yards from them in some bushes, in a ravine where the guns are hidden. And another kind of love music is introduced into our ears and souls, which does us good. Think? It makes you think—and beautiful thoughts come along to relieve you from the devilment of war and the men who cause it. . . .

"I was down at Salonika with some heavy-gun men on leave a few days ago, coming from various positions. I brought up this subject, and got from them confirmation, with admiration, of the doings and wonderful songs of these nightingales under the noses of our guns."

STORIES OF SWALLOWS.

The Swallow is another bird that has naturally appealed to the heart of men in the battlefield, winning attention few of these "familiar guests" receive at home. One is noted as having built in an Armstrong hut inhabited by a major of artillery, whose duty it was to see that his battery of howitzers "strafed" the Hindenburg line at intervals of about three minutes. "Occasionally on special occasions the guns fired incessantly all night long. The battery was situated in a small ruined and deserted village. The major's 'house' was only sixty or seventy yards from his guns. With each discharge the air concussion—quite apart from the crash of the report—was such that the little building rocked, and, indeed, almost jumped. The nest was situated inside the hut, at the end most distant from the door, and about three feet above the major's bed, within easy reach of his hand. The birds flew in and out of the hut quite fearlessly during the day, and both they and the major slept soundly at night on the best of terms with one another, during all this abominable racket."

A correspondent of the *Scotsman* writes of "some fascinating moments spent in watching two families of Swallows," reared in the rafters of a ruined shed; and the *Notts Guardian* (Aug. 18) publishes a similar letter from a soldier in the trenches—

"It has been a vile week, quite in keeping with our usual luck when starting a "push"—cold, windy, and wet. But I have had some enjoyment in watching the young swallows and martins. The second and last broods are out now practising and getting strong for their long trip south which is fast approaching. One set of five baby swallows have taken possession of a loop of telephone wire hanging between two battered pear trees just outside my store.

"The progress they have made in less than a week is wonderful. Last Tuesday I noticed them out for the first time battling against the wind and flying about a dozen yards at a time. The earlier attempts were very weak, and they were blown from tree to tree. One little creature was actually blown inside my store.

"All day they seemed to be going through gymnastic exercises, and at the end of the day they were able to sit securely on the swaying wire. This henceforth was their favourite perch, and five little funny things they looked all bunched together like balls.

"When the parent came, immediately a wholesale squeaking started and a rapid fluttering of wings and tails. The mouths opened to such an extent that the heads were lost behind the yellow gapes. It was quite marvellous to notice how each one was fed in turn without the parent perching once. For two whole days this mode of feeding continued, with every minute or two a short flight round.

"The third day the mother fluttered about two yards above them. It was the funniest thing imaginable. There, on the wire, were five agitated little things with gaping mouths, working their wings and tails to keep their balance, expecting to be fed, and the tantalising mother refusing to approach. At last one little hero fluttered up and took its food in the air, which method was henceforth adopted.

"The fourth day they had reached the stage of flying off to meet the breadwinner, even as far as ten yards away, and it was most amusing to watch the number of false starts for an adult bird that wouldn't own them. I was looking forward to to-day's performance, but it was cancelled 'owing to the exigencies of the service,' for a bad signaller had arrived early this morning and had taken away the line, so that my little friends were missing.

"But I lift my cap to them, for they gave me great pleasure during a most miserable week."

KESTRELS IN MACEDONIA.

An R.A.M.C. officer writes in the *Hospital* (July 14)—

"The Kestrels are nesting in the roofs of the houses in nearly every village. They compete for sites with the Jackdaws. Squabbles are common between the two species, but on the whole relations are friendly. I have seen a pair of Kestrels, a pair of Turtledoves, and a couple of pairs of

Jackdaws sitting amicably on the same roof. The birds are astonishingly tame. Though most of the houses are only one storey and so low that, sitting on my horse, my head may reach above the eaves, the birds will allow me to watch them from a distance of only a few yards. The number of Kestrels is surprising. It is common to see ten or a dozen pairs in one village. Their ways are most interesting. At evening time they seem to play in the air before they roost. Then you may see fifteen or twenty or even more circling about together, rising to great heights and wheeling round and round as if in a dance. Then one or more will swoop down at great speed: a most beautiful and graceful descent. Some after this descend, alight on tree or house top, and remain; others rapidly reascend and join again in the whirling throng.

"At mid-day it is common to see the Kestrels hawking over villages with a great

company of other birds; swallows, starlings, and jackdaws. It is probable they are pursuing insects, for they double and twist and rise and fall and grab with their claws, and often transfer something to their beaks from their claws by bending down the head as they fly. I often see these little hawks eating lizards and mice, but I have never seen one take a bird. I notice that the small birds do not regard them with fear. . . .

"During a visit to Salonika in the last days of March I was interested to see flocks of Gulls (I think the common Blackheaded Gull) apparently pursuing and catching insects in the air above the flat lands by the Monastir road. The movements and motions of the birds were similar to those of swallows hawking over English meadows. It is curious that in this country such birds as Seagulls, Hawks, and Crows should hawk insects in the air, and so far as I can make out it is often quite a small insect they pursue."

Economic Ornithology.

THE CATERPILLAR PLAGUE.

THE *Journal* of the Board of Agriculture for August, 1917, contains reports on the remarkable plague of caterpillars of the Antler-moth in the Peak District and in Yorkshire, last June. It seems probable, says Mr. John Snell, one of the Board's Inspectors, that the caterpillars occurred on practically all the mountain pasture-land from Derbyshire to Westmorland; and in their migrations they travelled at the rate of 18 in. to 2 ft. per minute. Walls and streams, however, acted as barriers and traps.

"In the pools of one small stream there were larvæ lying in masses from 6 in. to 9 in. deep. These were decaying and the stench was very noticeable. In fact, all the small streams intersecting the invaded pastures were covered with a green slime due to the decay of large numbers of caterpillars which had been drowned."

Happily the lower and richer pastures escaped, but the damage to upland grass areas "was very severe, and bare, brown hillsides were characteristic features in the

infested part." The making of trenches as traps and the use of lead arsenite spray are suggested. Messrs. A. C. Cole, B.A. (Board of Agriculture) and A. D. Imms, D.Sc., Reader in Agricultural Entomology, Manchester University, who contribute the report on the Peak District, add—

"It appears that all the natural conditions of the past season have been advantageous to the pest. There is definite evidence from several sources that the Plover has been exceptionally scarce. Starlings have likewise been less abundant. The exceptionally severe weather has, in all probability, caused a certain reduction of birdlife in general. Even when the snow had disappeared, the ground was so frozen that the reduced flocks of birds could not gain access to them. The absence of intermittent mild spells, when birds make considerable inroads on insect life, was characteristic of the past winter. . . .

"Greater discrimination should be exercised in the preservation of birdlife in these parts. As regards the control of this

caterpillar, the value that accrues from the presence of Rooks and Starlings cannot be over-estimated. The writers themselves have noticed large flocks of these birds over heavily infested areas. The scarcity of the Lapwing is a further factor in connection with the present infestation."

The plague spread also to Cumberland, and a correspondent in that county notes the part taken by the Black-headed Gull in dealing with it.

THE BULLFINCH.

"W. A. S.," who has made special study of this bird, writes:—

"It is hard to convert people who have allowed themselves to get into the groove of old and unreasonable antipathies. I find it so in this part of Surrey with regard to that lovely bird—Nature's pruner—the Bullfinch. Certain rich men order its complete destruction, though usually they have more fruit than they can possibly need; and so it comes to pass that in a neighbouring village I have seen a gardener shoot one within twenty feet of a main road. Some of his class have listened to my arguments when lecturing or in private conversation. The employer usually laughs in scorn: he knows better; but has he ever observed? Here are some birds keenly attacking certain gooseberry bushes in our garden in Northamptonshire. I drive them off suddenly, and, as expected, every single dropped bud is grubbed and useless. Day after day we watch some more just on the top of a quince tree in Surrey. They never touched the lower branches where we had a fine crop. Next season the fruit was heavy all over the tree.

"The heather is in beautiful flower as I write, just in that one section of the common where quite a party of Bullfinches were hard at work for weeks on end. So too with the Sallow buds, or those of our medlar or damsons in my old Sussex home. I am certain what their work is. Besides this, they eat all sorts of noxious seeds, and their graceful actions are a joy to watch. When a fine cock very slowly enjoys a raspberry—just drupel by drupel—that is, I think,

one of the most charming sights of wild life in one's garden."

BIRDS AND THE WAR IN THE U.S.A.

FOREWARNED by the experience of England and the ignorant onslaught on birds which the R.S.P.B. has had to contend against, the Audubon Association of the United States promptly issued, when war was declared, linen posters bearing the following caution in English and Italian—

WAR.

PROTECT THE BIRDS AS A WAR MEASURE

The food destroyed in America by insects and small rodents would feed the people of Belgium! Birds are the great natural enemies of these pests. The laws of this State and of the Nation protect insect-eating birds, but many are being shot wantonly and for food. Report violations to the nearest Game Wardens or to the address given below.

Writing in *Bird-Lore* (August, 1917), Mr. T. Gilbert Pearson says—

"There is growing evidence that owing to the high cost of meat and other food-staples, Italians and Hungarians in the North and negroes in the South have turned an unusual amount of attention to the killing of songbirds, and as the war goes on this slaughter will tremendously increase, unless checked. . . .

"This is the time when all Audubon Society members should be particularly alert. The enormously increased acreage being put under cultivation means that the greater crops of succulent plants, grains, and vegetables will furnish additional food for insect-pests. With increased food there will be an increased number of insects. This means we need a greater number of birds. We must wage a campaign of the utmost vigilance. Birds should be fed during the time of the year when their natural food is scarce. More nesting-boxes should be placed for them, and drinking fountains should be provided in dry regions; and, above all, look out for the man or boy with a gun!"

BIRDS *versus* INSECTS.

MISS DRESSER writes from Lyndhurst—

"My own experience is that I encourage birds by every means in my power, and we have enormous crops of fruit which never fail. I have only half an acre of garden, and one year two off us picked (independent of what the gardener gathered) over a hundred-weight of black currants. Last year scarcely anyone in the neighbourhood had apples, and we had a bountiful supply. My theory is that if you allow the birds to keep the trees clean there is enough for everybody. Strawberries are the only crop we net."

From Ealing another correspondent writes—

"We planted some peas in our garden and they were completely covered with green-fly. The Sparrows came to our assistance, and, deftly hopping in and out of the twigs supporting the plants, made a complete clearance of the fly, without touching a single pea. It seems evident that they eat insect food for a longer time than is commonly supposed. We have had beans and French beans and currants and raspberries, and the only depredation was that of currants by a hen blackbird, who could not resist the temptation afforded."

From Kent—

"My husband and I are very fond of birds, and we are fruit-growers and know their value. He is also learned in entomology and understands the harm wrought by insect pests."

From "Letters by a Lady Gardener" in *Garden Life* (August 4)—

"Robins, Chaffinches, Titmice, Hedge-Sparrows, Garden-Warblers, and all the smaller birds are amongst our best under-gardeners; and although the House-Sparrow may do a certain amount of mischief at times, he pays for it by feeding his young on insects and living in winter on the seeds of many weeds. . . . My garden is full of birds; but there is no garden in the neighbourhood with finer crops of fruit, as well as vegetables, and the fruit is as free from insects as the flowers from blight."

From "A Gardener in the Suburbs"—

"One of the numerous instructors of the public in the art of food-economy recommends utilization of 'wild foods,' including

not only Thrushes, Blackbirds, Terns, Herons, Plovers and their eggs, etc., but also grasshoppers, snails, caterpillars, and couch-grass. It may be hoped his recipes are better than his law, for he blunders into the assertion that 'Like all other birds, save starling and woodpigeon, blackbirds and their eggs are protected by law in most counties from March 1 to August 1,' whereas 'Green Plovers' eggs may be collected almost everywhere by careful searching between March and June'! We may, however, take it as certain that if the public eat the Thrushes and other small birds they will also have to eat the snails and caterpillars. But the birds would make a better job of it."

MERLIN AND GROUSE.

THE following account of the relations between game and other wild birds on a grouse moor is of special value as coming from a sportsman; name and address are withheld for the sake of the Merlins.

"I am one of several lessees of a moor of about 1500 acres, whose locality I will not disclose for the benefit of collectors and dealers. For about one-third of its circumference it is bounded by a 'freeholders' moor, where anyone may shoot and where Grouse are shot at 'call' nearly every morning of the season. The moor I am describing is moderately well burnt and trapped and is shot over (by driving) by eight or nine guns ten times a year. Not more than two or three of the shooters could be classed 'very good,' and two guns are not used. When I say that the average bag is 500 brace for the season it will be seen that quite a good head of game is kept up.

"For many years a benevolent neutrality has been observed towards Hawks, Owls, and Gulls, and this season three pairs of Merlins have nested on the moor, besides another pair on some adjoining land. There is also a reservoir on whose shores some twenty pairs of Blackheaded Gulls have regularly nested. The moor has for some time been kept under observation by amateur naturalists, who are of opinion that the Merlins feed chiefly on titlarks and other small birds, and the Gulls on insects, etc., but that neither of them interfere with the young grouse or with the eggs."

The Royal Society for the Protection of Birds.

COUNCIL MEETING.

THE Council of the Society held their quarterly meeting on July 20th, 1917, at the Middlesex Guildhall, S.W. Mr. Montagu Sharpe (Chairman) presided, and there were also present: Mr. Bell, Miss Clifton, the Hon. Mrs. Henniker, Mr. F. E. Lemon (Hon. Sec.), Mrs. Lemon, Mr. Meade-Waldo, and Miss Gardiner (Secretary).

Hon. Secretary's Report.

The Hon. Secretary reported that Miss C. V. Hall had resigned her position as a member of the Council of the Society, adding an assurance of her continued sympathy with and interest in the work. A resolution was unanimously adopted that an expression of the Council's regret at Miss Hall's resignation, and of hearty appreciation of the value of her past services, be entered on the minutes.—The Report chronicled that lectures had been given by Miss A. E. F. Barlow, Miss L. Brooks, Rev. J. E. Kelsall, and Mr. W. H. M. Jackson; that thirteen Bird-and-Tree Festivals had been held; and that Mr. Thorburn had very kindly promised to provide a picture for the Society Greeting-card for 1917-18. Bird Protection Orders had been issued for Roxburgh, Selkirk, and Inverness; also a number of Orders removing protection until June 21 from the eggs of the following sea-birds in certain counties: Black-headed Gull, Herring Gull, Greater and Lesser Black-backed Gulls, Common Guillemot, Razorbill, and Puffin.

Finance and General Purposes Committee.

The financial statement for the Second

Quarter of 1917 was read, and the receipt announced of the following legacies: £25 from the late Mrs. M. J. Hudson; £10 from the late Miss Jane Barker; £220 from the late Miss G. F. Packe; and, in July, £308 from the late Mrs. Edith Scott. The Rev W. J. Constable, having resigned as Hon Local Secretary for Uppingham, was appointed for Carmarthenshire, and Miss M. B. Gaskoin was appointed H.L.S. for S.W. Beds. The following Fellows and Members were elected:

FELLOWS: Mrs. Bagnall-O'Callan (Bath); W. A. Bishop-Culpeper-Clayton (Norfolk); Colonel Brotherton (Pateley Bridge); E. P. Charlesworth (London, S.W.); Lieut. G. L. A. Craven (3rd Duke of Cornwall's Light Infantry); J. F. L. Evans (Rickmansworth); Mrs. Mathwin (Newcastle); H. Hamilton Palairot (Dorchester); Mrs. Herbert Philips (Macclesfield); Mrs. C. F. Ratcliffe (Pateley Bridge); H. W. Robinson (Cirencester); Miss Seagrave (London, S.W.).

LIFE FELLOW: W. H. B. Fletcher (Bognor).

MEMBERS: Miss K. M. Baldwin (West Didsbury); Mrs. Andrew Barrett (Birkenhead); J. E. Bidwell (Great Shelford); Rev. Charles Bower (Dorset); H. C. Briggs (Hampton-on-Thames); A. Burrows (Dartford); Frank Bull (London, S.E.); Rev. R. B. Caton (Thetford); Brigadier-General Coxhead (Sudbury); H. D. Dry (Hunmanby); W. A. Edwards (Liverpool); Mrs. Godwin (Sevenoaks); Miss A. Harley (Liverpool); Miss M. E. Hambrough (Bath); Lt.-Colonel Horniblow (Fleet); Miss Horrocks (Bolton); H. V. W. Kell (Edgbaston); Rev. A. H. Malan (Launceston); A. Bethune Morgan (Hildenborough); Dr. Poole (Lytham); Mrs. Roberts (London, S.W.); Edwin S. Taylor (Sevenoaks); Dr. William Wallace (Board of Agriculture, S.W.); Miss Weir (Goudhurst); Mrs. Lewis D. Wigan (Kirkcudbright).

LIFE MEMBERS: C. H. L. Ewen (Windsor); J. O. Herdman (London, N.).

Watchers' Committee.

The report of the work done by the Watchers of the Society during the breeding-season was presented.

General Business.

Brigadier-General H. Page Croft, M.P., C.M.G., was elected a member of the Council of the Society.—The publication of 100,000 copies of the leaflet, "Birds, Insects, and Crops," and the continued demand for it, was reported; also the sending of over a thousand circular letters to local authorities on the subject of the economic value of birds and the abuse of "Sparrow-clubs," and of numerous letters to the Press, the clergy, and others. Thanks were accorded to writers in the Press, and to societies, clergy and ministers of various denominations, school-teachers, and members of the Society, and others who had given special help to the movement.—The use of poisoned grain in a Norfolk parish for killing birds had been actively contested by a Fellow of the Society, and the Parish Council had been informed by the Ministry of Food that such a use of grain could not be allowed.—It was further reported that the Home Office had required the Stoke D'Abernon Sparrow Club to reduce its list of birds to be killed from "all species" save four, to seven.—Correspondence with reference to bird-caging, destruction of Owls at Beverley, and other matters, was considered.

BIRDS AT THE LIGHTHOUSE.

THE use by migratory birds of the perches and rests erected by the Society at certain lighthouses continues to bear witness to the success of this scheme for saving weary little migrants at the time of their arrival in this country. From St. Catherine's, the Caskets,

and the South Bishop, reports of the principal keepers and others agree in stating that a large number of birds made use of the rests in the migration season, especially in misty or drizzly weather, between 11 p.m. and dawn. Among the birds noted were a great many Flycatchers, Wheatears, Redstarts, Blackcaps, and other Warblers, Thrushes, Blackbirds, Ring-Ouzels, Chaffinches, Starlings. A few Woodcock and Landrails were killed at the South Bishop by striking the lantern.

At St. Catherine's, not only were the ladder-rests well appreciated, but a pair of Swallows reared their young in the engine-room.

The Spurn Light was not lit, the area being in military occupation.

OBITUARY.

THE Earl of Haddington, whose death in his ninetieth year deprives Scotland of her oldest representative Peer, and East Lothian of an ideal lord of the manor and constant worker for the public good, was a Fellow of the R.S.P.B. and a firm champion of birds and their utility on the land. He had been associated with the Society since 1902.

Second-Lieutenant Godfrey Vassal Webster, Grenadier Guards, killed in action in August, was one of the younger students of ornithology from whom much was hoped. He was the writer of the very clever essay on "The Flight of Birds" which won the Society's Public School Medal in 1915 and was printed in *Bird Notes and News*, June 1916, and he also won the Second Prize in the previous year for an essay on "Our Summer Migrants." He was keenly interested in the protection of birds. Lieut. Webster was the only son of Captain Sir Augustus Webster, Bart, of Battle Abbey, Sussex, was born in

1897, educated at Eton and Sandhurst, and received his commission last October.

Members of the Society will sympathise deeply with Mr. J. R. B. Masfield, of Rosehill, Cheadle, Staffs., a member of its Council, on the loss of his eldest son, Second-Lieut. (temp. Captain) Charles J. B. Masfield, 1/5th North Staffordshire Regiment. He was wounded in action on July 1st, but not until Sept. 5th was it known that he had died the following day,

a prisoner in German hands. Captain Masfield, who had made already a reputation in literary and in local archæological circles, joined the colours two years ago, and in the last list of honours was awarded the Military Cross for "conspicuous gallantry and good leadership" in a successful raid on enemy trenches, when he "led his company with great dash and skill." His published works include two volumes of poems and the "Little Guide to Staffordshire."

Spring (1917) in Devon and Cornwall.

By H. P. WILKES.

ALL England is lovely in springtime, and Devon and Cornwall are no exception, for in spite of the late spring and bitter winds, the birds were not as late in breeding as might be supposed. The spot in Cornwall where these notes were written is a wonderful place for our feathered friends. Along the cliffs the Herring Gull nests in as great numbers as anywhere on the south coast. Three coves, more or less, constitute the gullery, and with the sea flashing out its wonderful sapphire, the brilliance of the gulls' white wings matching with the fleecy clouds sailing above, and the fresh green of spring upon the cliffs, the picture is complete. There are a few pairs of the Lesser Black-backed Gull and also of the Greater Black-back, but I never found the nests of the latter, though they must nest along this coast. A Buzzard was nesting on the cliffs, but the locality must remain unnamed for obvious reasons. It built a most elaborate nest, but finally laid its eggs on a bare ledge quite close, with no pretence at a nest! A good many pairs of Kestrels were to be seen, but I found only one nest—with five eggs. It was remarkable that the Kestrels always seemed to be on the same cliffs as the semi-wild Rock-Dove, yet neither birds nor young of the latter species were ever touched; in fact on one occasion a Kestrel was seen sitting within a foot of a Rock-Dove

on the same ledge of rock. The Rock-Pipits are not nearly so common here as on the Dorsetshire coast.

A little inland there is an extensive marsh covered with tall osier bushes. Here there are numberless pairs of Sedge Warblers and Chiffchaffs, though in the swampy undergrowth their nests are very difficult to find. Several pairs of Jays and Magpies breed in the taller osiers, in addition to Moorhen, Mallard, and Teal. There was a report of a Marsh-Warbler having been seen; more likely a mistaken Reed-Warbler! I never saw any Coot or Grebes; the undergrowth is too thick, no doubt. I came upon a brood of eight Marsh-Tits one evening. Several pairs of Grey Wagtails and a pair of Kingfishers nest along the banks of a little stream running through the marsh, and probably a pair of Dippers. Bunting are very well represented, all four of the commoner species being found; three nests of the Yellow Hammer were discovered within half a mile. The Sedge Warblers arrived about May 1st, but the Chiffchaff, as usual, a great deal earlier. I have neither seen nor heard the Reed-Warbler, which is so local in Cornwall. The recent growth of plantations has increased the range of the Willow-Warbler: there are a good many round here, and of the five nests of that family, *Phylloscopus*, I found, three were Willow-Warblers' and two Chiffchaffs'. The

Willow-Warblers' nests were all in actual holes in mossy, overgrown banks, while the Chiffchaffs' were well above the ground, one seven feet up in a clump of bamboo. Spotted Flycatchers are plentiful; they build their nests curiously high, one of those which I found being quite 30 feet up! Blue Tits and Wrens and Golden-crested Wrens are very scarce this year, owing, no doubt, to the hard winter.

This spot is a great place for Nightjars. Some scores of pairs breed here annually; they lay their eggs on the rubble thrown up many years ago from the mines. Heather has grown up in places and the Nightjars are to be found among it. It is a very beautiful sight to see the parent birds in the gloaming, hovering and turning after the flying insects and moths which are their food; and on the wing to hear them utter their strange note, locally known as "ribbling," and to hear them clap their wings. They have another sharp alarm-cry, a harsh "kek," not unlike a Kestrel's cry. In the old engine-houses of the mines Owls, Kestrels, and Jackdaws have their nests.

The sea-shore provides many interesting sights for the bird-lover. As late as April 23rd I noticed a pair of Red-breasted Mergansers in the bay, and on the sand-dunes Ringed Plover were nesting and the Curlew stayed as late as May 21st, when I saw them trekking off across the sky to the moors inland: likewise the Dunlin; their numbers slowly diminished until they were limited to some five non-breeders. These five I made friends with, and they allowed me to come within two yards of them or less. Perhaps they share the confidence in man which the Dotterel displays. In my case I trust the confidence was merited: may it be an object lesson to teach those who must needs shoot, to "observe"! In winter these dunes are visited by numbers of our winter visitors, Curlew and Dunlin, Godwits and Curlew-Sandpipers, one or two Grey Phalarope in autumn, and occasionally the Little Stint: in addition to several varieties of Duck. But after all, no season can beat the Spring.

Devon was equally lovely: the weather was at its best and hottest, 82° being registered in the shade early in May. Where

I was, the sand-dunes and salt-marshes stretch for some eight miles. No doubt both Dunlin and Curlew had nests, but I never found them. There were one or two Water-Rails, but even the Land-Rail is not really plentiful as in some other parts, such as Ireland. Warblers were very common: some forty of *A. schænobaenus* being counted in one afternoon: Grasshopper-Warblers there were one or two, but the Reed-Warbler I never saw, though I fancied I could distinguish its note more than once. It was a land of Cuckoos too; eleven or twelve a day was no record observation. Stonechats, Whinchats, Wheatears and both species of Whitethroat were to be found on the waste land and an occasional Yellow Wagtail, while along the streams flitted Dippers, Grey Wagtails, and one or two Sandpipers. The latter were unusually tame and I made quite an acquaintance with them when fishing for trout in these rough Devon streams that reminded one so of the "burns" o' "Bonnie Scotland."

Along the cliffs three pairs of Buzzards were nesting, and before I left one had eggs. A Raven's nest was there too, standing some 4 feet high in a cleft: this, however, was robbed of its five eggs! The delinquent was dealt with and the eggs forfeited. I saw the site of a Peregrine eyrie, but the birds were not about: the Herring and Lesser Black-backed Gull both nest on these cliffs, as also the Guillemot. Black-headed Gulls breed on the marshes, but I was a little too early, though I saw about twenty last year's nests.

The great feature of this locality is the Duck which come to breed. An old tenant farmer who rents the shooting of the sand dunes told me that at least *two hundred pair* of Sheldrake come to breed there every year, and that as many as four hundred pair have been known to arrive. Such a statement *may* be slightly exaggerated, but on the whole I should think not very much. I myself saw sixty-four Sheldrake when out for a walk on the dunes, at a season when the female birds were probably sitting in the burrows. Wild Duck, Teal, and Shoveller all nest in moderate numbers, but I was surprised not to see any Pochar'd. Truly a paradise for the bird-lover!

Notes.

Two changes in the *personnel* of the Council of the R.S.P.B. were effected at the July meeting. The resignation of Miss C. V. Hall will be regretted by the older workers particularly, as she has been associated with the society almost from the time of the transference of its headquarters from Manchester to London, when it consisted only of a band of ladies united by a common pledge not to wear the plumage of wild birds, and was without officers, constitution, or office. In June, 1891, when the Duchess of Portland became president and the late Mrs. Phillips vice-president, Miss Hall took the hon. treasurership, which she held until 1895; and she has been continuously a member of its governing body, of the committee which existed from 1893 to 1904, and of the Council formed on the incorporation of the society in the latter year. Miss Hall remains a vice-president, to which office she was elected in 1895, and is thus entitled *ex officio* to attend the meetings at which she has been so regular and welcome an attendant for twenty-four years.

* * *

Brigadier-General Page Croft, M.P., the new member, is no stranger to the work of Bird Protection or to the members of the society. Consistently and eloquently he has supported efforts in the House of Commons to bring the hideous plumage-trade to an end. In 1912 he introduced a Bill to prohibit the sale of plumage of any species of bird having its habitat at any time of the year in any part of His Majesty's Overseas Dominions; a Bill heartily supported by the R.S.P.B. In the following year he was the most vigorous speaker on the Second Reading of the Prohibition of Importation Bill which the Government introduced (and let slip through their fingers); and few of those interested will have forgotten his speeches at the society's Annual Meeting and at the Public Meeting that year. His forcible words on the utility of birdlife both then and to the society's members last March further demonstrated the nature of the help which Bird Protectors may look for from General Page Croft.

* * *

It is pleasant to know that one of the most ardent and active defenders of wild life in the United States, Dr. W. T. Hornaday, has received special honour from Yale University, which on June 20th bestowed upon him, as "leader in movements for the protection of wild life in America," the honorary degree of Master of Arts. Dr. Hornaday, like all reformers, has no doubt made enemies in the course of his campaign (among the feather-traders, for instance, and the makers and users of automatic guns), so that this endorsement of his vigorous methods will be encouraging to sympathisers and followers in his own and other countries. His biennial report on the Permanent Wild Life Protection Fund, started through his efforts in 1913 to constitute a permanent endowment, and supported by men and women of wealth and humanity, forms a valuable record of the crusade in the States; and it also constitutes no small testimony to the part he himself has taken in that fighting without which no serious reform was ever achieved.

* * *

The Centenary, on July 12th, of H. D. Thoreau, the Naturalist-philosopher of Concord, was hardly an event in the ornithological world, but no bird-lover can omit him from the calendar of priests and prophets, even though his notes on birds are comparatively few, and scientific investigation wholly lacking. He compiled no work on "Walden-killed species" and formed no collection of "Walden-taken eggs." The birds were simply among the neighbours and friends with whom he lived in peace. He has even a good word for the sportsman and hunter, as sport and hunting were understood by the New Englander in the wilds, but at the same time considers that "if he has the seeds of a better life in him" the hunter should develop into something higher. He inclined to a "finer way of studying ornithology" than with the gun's aid. In his intimate references to partridge, owl, woodcock, loon, jay, robin, or chickadee, it is the little mind or soul of the bird he recognizes, not its outward seeming. Their voices spoke to the poet in him, and their

friendship was with him a thing to be desired. A sentence in *Walden* will be echoed by many another nature-lover—

"I once had a sparrow alight on my shoulder for a moment while I was hoeing in a village garden, and I felt that I was more distinguished by that circumstance than I should have been by any epaulet I could have worn."

* * *

Miss Isa Postgate's new booklet, "From God's Furrow" (A. H. Stockwell, Ludgate Hill), is concerned with legends of wild flowers and their message in war-time; but bird-lovers will claim one of her graceful parables for their own. It pictures a Robin delving among fallen leaves beneath bare boughs in early spring and revealing in sudden sunshine a cluster of white violets; and Robin wears a "suit of khaki" with a crimson stain on his breast. The Redbreast as herald of nature's resurrection is a happy companion to the old familiar Redbreast who covered the dead babes with leaves; but "robin in khaki" is the touch that tells.

* * *

Readers of *Bird Notes and News* will delight to hear not only that Mr. Thorburn has again painted one of his charming bird-pictures for the Society's Greeting-card, 1917-18, but that the subject this time is khaki-clad Robin. The artist's Robin is "Behind the Lines in France," and stands on the snow-wreathed arm of one of the temporary identification crosses that mark the resting-places of Britain's soldier-sons.

* * *

Lord Eldon has done a double service to the cause of the birds by expressing in the *Times* his own opinion of their services and by eliciting that of Professor Hopkinson. The Professor was reported to have said in his address to delegates of the British Association that "Rooks and Wood-pigeons should be ruthlessly exterminated." On this Lord Eldon wrote (July 9)—

"I cannot pretend to have studied the habits of birds as closely as he has, but I believe that almost everything in nature has its uses in this world (except, perhaps, the German), and I believe that the world would be the worse for the extermination of either

the Rook or the Wood-pigeon. I have myself shot and examined the crop of a Wood-pigeon which contained three grains of barley and 70 turnip-grubs (as certified by the Government expert), with not a morsel of anything else. No doubt the Pigeon, like other birds, will eat grain when exposed, but, unless the turnip-grub is to be classed as a farmer's friend, surely the Wood-pigeon has its uses in the farmer's world?"

* * *

In answer to Lord Eldon, Professor Hopkinson quotes his words to the delegates as they were spoken and not as they were reported—

"There are birds, such as the Rook and Wood-pigeon, which should be reduced in number, as they are so destructive to our field and garden crops, but such birds as Hawks and Owls, which are persecuted by gamekeepers, are our farmers' best friends, and their extermination ought not to be allowed."

He further adds: "These birds might be exterminated, but Rooks and Wood-pigeons cannot be, nor should they or any bird."

* * *

The Board of Agriculture, in "authorizing" the killing of certain migratory wild birds from August 1 to the next close season (March 1 unless locally varied), is hardly more happy than in its previous intermeddlings with the Bird Protection Acts. A list of the nineteen "authorized" birds includes only one which is protected in winter-time in as many as four areas. This one is the Redshank, a bird which breeds in no great numbers in marshy districts but is fairly common on the coast in autumn and winter. One other of the nineteen is protected in two areas; two or three others (the phraseology is doubtful) in one area only, the Isle of Wight. The rest have never been protected in the winter season. Was it really necessary in the interests of the national food supply to inform Somerset that it may kill the Godwit, if it can; the Isle of Wight that it may kill the Whimbrel (a bird which usually arrives in May and departs in September); and the sportsmen of these islands in general that they have the Board's permission to shoot Woodcock, Snipe, and Wild Duck?

The Plumage Trade.

THE attitude of the Government on the feather trade cannot be called satisfactory. In July last Mr. James Buckland addressed a letter to members of both Houses of Parliament, protesting against the continued import of plumage in spite of the prohibition under the Defence of the Realm Act. As he well said: "That these worse than useless articles should be allowed to oust our food supplies from the holds of British ships, when the saving of tonnage is the very life of the nation, is an outrage." Questioned on the subject in the House, the President of the Board of Trade stated that consignments were admitted if despatched or paid for on or before the date of the prohibition, adding "It is not unlikely that a certain quantity of feathers, which come from a great distance, will continue for some time to arrive under the above conditions." To this the natural rejoinder is: From how many countries do steamers take more than five months to reach London? The *Financial News* comments—

"In plain English, this German feather trade is to be left free to continue indefinitely its manœuvres for raiding the Empire's territories and stealing the Empire's property."

The Parliamentary Secretary of the Board has since given assurance that it shall be made a condition of licences to import feathers that they shall not be available for the importation of any feathers originating

in British India, or of any feathers from any other part of the Empire which has prohibited the export of such feathers."

Why can the Department not frankly and honestly at once direct that no licences whatever shall be issued for "fancy feathers" from any part of the world, as demanded by the House of Commons in 1914 and imperative at this crisis in the shipment of the necessities of life?

A new crusade is needed to warn women against bolstering up the trade, since every "osprey" (whether the upstanding plume or the weedy fringe), or other wild bird's feather worn, brands the wearer as no patriot.

In a letter to the Chairman of the R.S.P.B., Dr. Hornaday writes (July 26, 1917)—

"I sincerely hope that you and your Society will be able to make permanent the prohibition of the importation of wild birds' plumage, and I have no doubt that you will do so. I think you would be pleased and amused if you could see how very tightly the U.S. Custom-houses draw their line against the importation. Last week the Conservation Commissioner of the State of New York destroyed by burning 10,000 dollars' worth of aigrettes which through long and careful work had been ferreted out and seized in the hands of dealers here in New York City; and at the same time the dealers were mulcted in suitable fines.

Bird-and-Tree Challenge Shield Competition.

THE Essays sent in for the 1917 Competition are now in the hands of the Judges, and the results will be made known to the competing Schools as quickly as possible. On account of the paper-shortage special County Reports will not be issued this year, but a list of the principal awards in the whole Competition will be forwarded to every School which entered a Team, together with the report on the work sent in by that Team.

Nature-Study in Cumberland Schools has sustained a grievous loss in the death, on June 12th, of Miss Hayes, head mistress of

Keswick C.E. Girls' School. The Keswick Girls' Team, through her training, has done admirable Bird-and-Tree work for some years past, winning the Shield in 1914 and 1915. Miss Hayes was much beloved, and a brass tablet to her memory has been put up in the school by the staff and scholars.

Among the young naturalists whose lives have been laid down in the war is Sergeant Johnston, son of the head teacher of Nether Denton School. His colonel, who died with him, had said that he was the finest companion to march or ride with, as he could

talk about all the living and growing things seen on the way; his knowledge and love of nature began in his school days.

Mr. F. F. Neill, a Belfast teacher, writes to the R.S.P.B. :—

"Surely old England will never be reduced so low that we must order the wholesale slaughter of any species of our feathered friends. Compare the campaign in a certain English daily with the words of the *Belfast Evening Telegraph*, which said in the cold weather, 'Remember the sparrows; give them a crumb; the cold weather will do enough harm without our killing them.' The Sparrow Club is unknown here, and the country people treat the birds as the friends and not the enemies of man.

"I do not know very much about English children, but I know that the Irish boys and girls are naturally fond of birds. I have noted in spring that the boys took quite a fatherly interest in birds and their nests that they found on their way to and from school. I teach my boys to love all birds, and I do not think one of them would take even an egg from a nest. During winter they feed the feathered folk with scraps of food useless for human consumption, knowing well, for instance, that the starling loves a bit of bacon rind and giving him what they leave at breakfast.

"In our church in the city Dr. Macmillan gives the children an address on the birds and flowers periodically: one of the finest addresses I have heard was based on the sentence, 'Christ watches at the deathbed of a sparrow,' and it went far in inculcating the principles of humanity and justice to the feathered world.

"In the enclosed leaflet you will notice with pleasure that our Department of Agriculture recommends the preservation rather than the destruction of birds."

(Leaflet No. 10, on "Wireworm," issued February, 1916, by the Department of Agriculture and Technical Instruction for Ireland, in discussing preventive and remedial measures, says: "Birds which follow the plough—especially starlings, gulls, and lapwings—do great service by eating wireworm, and they should be protected and encouraged.")

THE SCHOOL SNIPE.

THE Snipe has been a favourite subject with such Bird-and-Tree Cadets as are fortunate enough to be able to study that bird of the marshes, since a Norfolk boy achieved fame by certain novel observations. But never before has a record been furnished of a Snipe that came to school, apparently with the object either of being "observed" or in the execution of duty in Home Defence. The following interesting note comes from Mr. H. W. Clarke, head master of Necton School, Norfolk, appended to a paper in the Snipe from one of his boys.

"Separated from the Infants' School by a very narrow belt of garden and a low hedge is a marshy field. In this field a pair of Snipe apparently had their nest, though the nest itself could never be found by any of us. Regularly every day the two birds could be seen zigzagging around, uttering their harsh 'clicking noise' (as the boy calls it) as they rose from the ground. This, which seems to be their only vocal call, was replaced by the 'Bleating' when they were well on the wing. Presently one bird alone was seen, and this one came regularly every day and stood for long periods silent on the top of a chimneypot-shaped ventilator on the school-house. After long periods of silence it would utter its 'tick-tack' several times, and then there would be another long silence. In the early morning it would, however, 'tick-tack' continuously for half an hour or more. In fact, as we had our windows open and the bird was not twenty yards away, its insistent call became quite a nuisance.

"In the evening again the call was often repeated as the bird stood on its observation post.

"Not more than thirty feet from the place where the bird stood is a swing (possibly rendered invisible by the trees to which it is attached), and on this my children have swung for long periods while the bird monotonously tick-tacked without taking the slightest notice of their vicinity. That we were about at all times and that over 130 children were present in school hours seemed to make no difference.

"While standing on the ventilator it kept turning its head in every direction as if acting as a 'Look out.' Whenever it

took to the wing it repeated the unmelodious tick-tack, sounding like nothing so much as a wheel badly in need of greasing. The 'tack' was about a fourth below the 'tick.'

"By-and-bye it was noticed that the Snipe no longer came to his vantage-point; and not long after this two old birds and five young birds were daily seen flying over the field and the school buildings. The conclusion to which we came was that the male bird kept his post as sentry while incubation was going on, and gave up the duty when the chicks were hatched. We are, however, by no means sure that it was always the male which stood on the ventilator. As I was often told by the children that 'now there is a bigger bird on the chimney' (meaning ventilator), possibly the pair took turns at sitting on the eggs and taking 'sentry go.'

"The birds had become so much accustomed to us that they continually flew quite low over us, bleating as they did so. Whenever this happened the bird's wings were always spread out to their full extent, so that it appeared to plane along—its planes quivering violently, but never flapping as they do in flight."

"ARBOR DAY."

SONGS, plays, and musical pieces are lent by the society for inclusion in the programme of Bird-and-Tree Festivals; and it is suggested that an extra effort might be made by schools this year to give attractive performances and possibly add thereby to the local Bird-Protection or Red Cross funds. Lantern slides can also be obtained.

It is specially urged that the *trees planted should be such as afford berries for the birds in winter.*

BIRD NOTES IN THE WAR AREA.

In the Winter Number of "Bird Notes & News" it is hoped to publish some interesting notes from the Western front, by Mr. Oliver G. Pike, the well-known writer of the "Birdland" books, now on active service with the R.F.C.

Greeting Card, 1917-18

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BEHIND THE LINES

"Robin in Khaki" behind the Lines in France.

Specially Designed and Painted by

MR. ARCHIBALD THORBURN,

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Save our Bird Allies.

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BIRD NOTES AND NEWS (issued quarterly) will be sent post free to any address for 1s. per annum, payable in advance; single numbers, 3d.

To Members of the Society subscribing 5s. and upwards per annum it is forwarded gratis and post free.

Printed by WITHERBY & Co., 326, High Holborn, W.C.1., and published by the ROYAL SOCIETY FOR THE PROTECTION OF BIRDS 23, Queen Anne's Gate, S.W.1.

Bird Notes & News

ISSUED QUARTERLY BY THE ROYAL SOCIETY
:: FOR THE PROTECTION OF BIRDS ::

Vol VII.]

WINTER, 1917.

[No. 8.]

Birdlife and War's Alarums.

How far wild birds are affected by shell and shock, and by the presence of aircraft, in their own particular element is still a subject for interesting speculation. In England the birds do not seem greatly concerned by the passing of aeroplanes, though it has been noted from the first that a night invasion excites Pheasants into midnight crowing, and that by day too they are sensibly perturbed. The small birds apparently pay no heed to either sight or sound of the air-monsters. Larger species have been occasionally reported as showing anger and curiosity. One singular instance is cited in the *Bulletin* of the Ligue Francaise pour la Protection des Oiseaux. M. C. van Kempen narrates how he saw at Saint Omer the Jackdaws quitting their homes in the steeples, throwing themselves on the aeroplanes, clinging on to them and striking them with their beaks as if to drive away these enormous unknown birds.

On the other hand, Captain Shipton, R.A.M.C., writing in the *Field* (Nov. 17) from Palestine, refers to the indifference of the great swarms of birds on a fresh-water lake, to the planes flown above them. Herons, Redshanks, Bitterns, Spoonbills, Sandpipers, betrayed no concern. A flock of Pelicans alone heeded the aircraft. "They came over rather late, at a good height, in their stately, orderly formation, and a couple of aeroplanes were flying not very far above them. They did not show the slightest alarm, but after circling round the lake decided to go a little further, and I lost sight of them flying north along the coast." "I have been astonished," adds Captain Shipton, "to find how little birds notice aeroplanes. The lake is flown over many

times a day, but it creates no more alarm than a steam engine in the next parish."

The fact is perhaps not so very surprising. Birds are not commonly afraid of large objects on land or sea, until they learn by bitter experience that such objects are dangerous. It is man they fear, not the elephant; and a ship is a thing to follow, not to flee from. To suppose that they should recognize the strangeness of any moving thing but themselves sailing in the air, is probably to expect too much of their perceptive, or reasoning, faculties. Also there can hardly exist in their little minds—the minds of creatures equally at home on land or in the air—the same strong line of demarcation between the two elements which has been impressed upon earth-bound man. The species which have been chiefly observed to regard the flight of airships with apparent fear have been those, like pheasant and barn-door poultry, which do little flying and fear the monster, not as a rival in the air, but as a menacing bird-of-prey approaching them.

From the actual field of war the records are continually of fearlessness or heedlessness on the part of birds, even amid the thunder of guns and bursting of shells. This, again, is on a par with the indifference shown by many small birds in building in and about railway stations, under railway bridges shaken constantly by the passing of thundering trains, and in and amongst machinery. Whether or not such heavy rumbling and booming noises affect their hearing as they affect man's—which is questionable—they are clearly regarded as non-dangerous. And as non-dangerous they have accepted the hideous uproar of the battlefield. Numerous stories have been

written home of Swallows and Starlings and Sparrows nesting amid ruins not yet free from shell-fire, and of Larks and Nightingales singing serenely in the pauses of artillery bombardment. Mr. Oliver Pike tells such a tale of a Whitethroat in the present number of *Bird Notes and News*. Partridges and Magpies have been described strutting fearlessly in No Man's Land; and a sudden vivid interest in the fate of the birds of the shattered villages has sprung up in the mind of many a soldier. As M. le Dr. Cathelin puts it, in the graceful French way, in the article already alluded to, "How greatly must our young soldiers of the front lines feel themselves upheld and sustained on the eve of an attack when they see flying all about them these gracious little birds, symbolical of the tenacity, the courage, and the hope of France!"

The effect on birdlife is not, however, to be measured by the inexperienced indifference of the birds. They must have been slaughtered by the thousand. A correspondent of the *Scotsman* gave recently two instances worth quoting. One relates to apparent shock only—

"I wonder if it is possible for birds to suffer from shell-shock? A day or two ago a shell burst not very far away, and afterwards I saw two Starlings roaming listlessly over the ground, every now and then staggering as if weak and unsteady on their legs. I caught one quite easily, but could see nothing wrong with it. It lay perfectly still in my hand looking at me with glazed, lustreless eyes. I caught the other and placed both in an old box to see what would happen. They settled down contentedly enough, but the next morning they had recovered sufficiently to protest vigorously against their imprisonment. When liberated they both flew off apparently none the worse for their experience."

The other is a different tale, and concerns flocks of Gulls feeding on a marshy area, enjoying the worms and insects turned up by shell-fire—

"I have sometimes found dead birds at rare intervals, but I have never seen a bird struck by a shell until yesterday. I was

watching a flock of gulls circling at a little distance in front of our position. Suddenly I heard the whine of a 9-inch shell, and, to my astonishment one of the gulls appeared to dissolve into a cloud of feathers that floated about in the air. A minute later the shell burst. Apparently the shell left nothing of the gull's body. That vanished, for only the feathers came drifting down. I was talking to a naval man upon the subject, and he said that he had occasionally seen the same thing happen when the cruisers were engaged at gun practice at sea. The gunfire seems to attract the gulls, for they collect in hundreds, perhaps to feed upon the fish killed by the concussions. Strange to say, a few hours later I was examining the hole made by either a 10- or 11-inch shell, and to my surprise found a poor little sparrow lying dead at the bottom of the hole. It was quite uninjured, and had probably been flying over when the shell burst, and the blast had killed it. It was rather interesting to see on one day such evidences of the destruction of birds by shell-fire."

Yet another of the dangers is the presence of asphyxiating poisonous gases; the French *Bulletin* instances numbers of birds picked up dead in the woods, overcome by gas fumes.

The real tragedy of birdlife in the war is, however, not on the battle-ground itself, but on the familiar homeland; not in shell or shock or poison-gas, but in the hideous destruction of trees and woods and every sort of cover in the progress of war. And it is this tragedy which Great Britain, the country that has narrowly enough escaped the horrors of war on its own soil, is crazily threatening to perpetrate by intention.

In every part of Britain noble and glorious old woods have been and are being sacrificed: perhaps to national necessity, perhaps to a greed anxious to make something out of pressing wants; perhaps to a perverted sense of patriotism in placing all that is beautiful under the Juggernaut of war. Possibly for these reasons. But most certainly for lack of national foresight in planting and providing perennial supplies of timber by scientific and systematic forestry.

Beyond this, in part unavoidable, misfortune, come the cries of the shortsighted cranks who are ever ready to preach to agriculture. Grub up the hedgerows is one cry; they are beautiful, beauty is a sentimental folly, hedges drink up the good from the soil, away with them! Let us have wire fences and ugliness! Cut down the trees; they too live on the land that should support only cattle and crops; leave beast and plant alike without shelter or shade. Above all, destroy the birds; they are seen eating corn and fruit, and if what they take is as a popgun to a howitzer compared with the amount they save from noxious grubs, do not heed:

have we not poison-sprays and a Board of Agriculture to deal with wireworm and leather-jacket and turnip-fly and antler-moth and weevil and green-fly and woolly aphis, and the thousand and one more pests of the field? Better give the whole land to the caterpillar we do not see than a square yard to the bird we do see!

It is here that the blight of war endangers England's country-side; not in the inevitable loss, but in the blundering, panic-born obsession of the official scaremonger, and in the dangerous ignorance of a country unaccustomed and unable to apprehend its real riches and to conserve them.

Birds in the War Area.

THE following extracts from letters written by Mr. Oliver G. Pike, of the "Birdland" books, now on active service with the Royal Flying Corps, are published by kind permission. The first is dated from "Somewhere in France," May, 1917:—

"Although I am in the country, there is not a great deal of bird life around here. The chief thing of interest is a Magpie's nest in the village. I have noticed that this bird is quite common, and each village that I have seen has one or two pairs. The birds usually choose a tree right in the village itself, and seem very tame. Each night we have a pair of White Owls flying around, and I often watch them: they come right on to the roof of our workrooms. Close by I have a Hedge-sparrow's nest with five young, and in the same hedge I have heard a Whitethroat and Garden Warbler singing, and, in an orchard near by, a Blackcap. There are plenty of Swallows and Martins, and of course the Sparrow, and a few Larks.

"A few days ago I paid a visit to a town not far away, and made a point of visiting the churches. The cathedral was wrecked, with the exception of some of the great walls, and these were still standing, and they reminded me very much of some of the lesser white cliffs of the Yorkshire coast, for the walls at some period had been covered with white plaster, and this was all spotted and

broken by pieces of shell, and in the holes many birds had taken up their abode. Here were lots of Jackdaws, and Pigeons and screaming Swifts were also searching for nesting sites. It was a weird sight to stand below on a vast heap of debris and charred wood, and to find that this once fine cathedral was now the home of numerous birds. I went from there to another church, a much smaller one, and just the four walls were left standing, with big shell-holes for windows. The actual windows, of course, were blown to fragments; through one of these there was a waving branch of a tree clothed in the beautiful green of spring, and just beyond, on a higher branch, there sat a Thrush. The setting sun was throwing a beam of light on to him, and the notes of his beautiful song rang through these sad ruins. Everywhere there was wreckage—the altar, organ, and once fine paintings on the walls were all simply blown to oblivion, and the only bright things in that desolate scene were that green branch framed by a shell-broken window, and that loud, pure song. I have listened to the music of the Thrush in some strange places, but never have I heard it under more tragic circumstances. What a whole world of tragedy could be written about that fine building since the last 'Evensong' was heard there. The destruction left behind by the Huns is awful—it is all so needless and wanton, and priceless buildings are just a heap of broken rubble."

July 19, 1917.

"Since I last wrote you our squadron has moved, and we are in a more desolate spot, but, notwithstanding, there are plenty of birds about. A Kestrel can be seen almost any day hovering outside our work-rooms, and a few nights ago I had a very good view of two Little Owls which were capturing mice quite near me. We also had a nest of White Owls near by, and the young were successfully reared; they were in a hole in a pollard willow. Larks are still singing, and a few evenings ago I heard a Garden Warbler in full song: this was in a tall hedge around a German cemetery. Yellowhammers, too, are still singing. Near a small pond I heard a strange song, evidently a Warbler, but I could not see the bird, and did not have time to wait. One of our men saw a large bird out on the moor, and from his description I should imagine it was one of the Harriers.

"There is still a wealth of wild flowers about. Some of the fields hereabouts, which a few months ago were the scenes of desperate battles and were running red with the blood of brave men, are now a mass of scarlet poppies; in other places thistles cover the ground, but everywhere there is a mass of white clover. It is strange how the poppies have spread everywhere; they are on the ruins of the smashed villages even, and a few evenings ago I saw a fine show of them on a small wall which had escaped a little of the general destruction. It is a terrible and almost heartbreaking sight to look upon these once beautiful villages, with their farms, pretty red-tiled cottages, and little churches, smashed to a heap of broken rubble. You can have no idea of what this destruction is unless you look upon it. Here and there you come across little things which remind you of the once happy days; perhaps it is the broken toy of a little child, or a wrecked pram, bits of broken pottery, a smashed piano, but one and all are battered almost beyond recognition. There is one strange thing that I have noticed, and it is a thing that might make some men think long and deeply. Let me mention a few instances.

"In a small village which I have seen, the whole place, from the chateau to the humblest dwelling, is battered to a mass of

brickdust, yet the crucifix—a half-sized image of Christ on the Cross, is standing intact! There is not a mark on the image, and the cross itself has just a scratch on it caused by a piece of shrapnel. In a large cathedral which I visited there was a large stone image of the Virgin Mary; although great shells had burst all around, and the surrounding walls were peppered with pieces of shell, this was not damaged in any way. In the same cathedral there was a small wooden image, about 18 inches long, of the Child Christ, lying on a heap of smashed masonry 20 feet high; this image had been blown half across the cathedral, not once but many times, and had been exposed to the explosion of hundreds of the largest shells, yet it was practically undamaged. But, strangest thing of all, when we saw it there was lying by the side of it—almost touching it—a large German shell, and this had failed to explode. Just one more instance. There is a certain village which was held by the Huns, and we shelled it. When I say that, I mean it was done properly, in the real British way. The whole place was churned up, the village was buried under a mass of earth and stones, it was turned over and re-turned until it looked like a jumbled mass of earth shaken up by a hundred earthquakes; and yet through all this the village crucifix stood intact! Can you explain it? Can anyone? There are dozens of other instances, and I thought my little experience might interest you.

"On the top of the battered walls of a great cathedral I saw a pair of Kestrels had made their nest, and I could hear the young calling and saw the parents bringing food to them. The same walls were occupied by numbers of Jackdaws and Swifts. It is strange how the birds are quite unconcerned by gunfire; they seem to stick to their old haunts, and it takes a tremendous lot to dislodge them. I have known the Nightingale to sing continuously through a night of bombardment; guns were in the wood, and shells were bursting there and machine-gun bullets were whistling through, but the Nightingale stuck it, and continued his battle-song. I have stood by a Whitethroat's nest, with the largest Hun shells bursting near, and the very air seemed to be filled with a terrifying, tearing crash, followed by a long, echoing

roar, yet the little bird remained there quite unconcerned by the awful noise and vibration. If you went too near she just tumbled out into the trench beneath and pretended she had a broken wing, and if you tried to pick her up she led you a nice dance over bully-

beef tins, rolls of wire and other oddments at the bottom of the trench, until you had been led about 50 yards away; then she jumped up and asked you how you liked being 'had'! She was a plucky little bird, and reared four young."

The Plumage Trade.

EGRETS IN VENEZUELA.

It is announced that Venezuela has passed a law to govern the collection and exploitation of "osprey" feathers, by which the killing or trapping of Herons is prohibited at all seasons, and the feathers may be collected only from July to November inclusive, the moulting season. Collectors of customs, it is added, are not to permit the exportation of such feathers without having satisfied themselves that they are moulted feathers and were not taken from slaughtered birds; and the Minister of Fomento is to furnish each custom-house with samples of moulted plume and "live" plume in order that they may know the difference.

Members of the R.S.P.B. in particular will remember that Venezuela has been the great land of the "osprey"-hunter since the frightful destruction by the trade of the heronries in the United States and the vigilant protection of the few remaining colonies of Egrets and Herons there by the wardens of the Audubon Association. It was on the Venezuelan trade that the plume-merchants took their stand in 1909, when the remarkable stories of Mr. Leon Laglaize were floated to assure the public that every heronry in that land was rigidly protected and that every plume obtained was picked up in the marshes or taken from the lining of the birds' nests! This ingenious farrago was demolished at the time by the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds, but the feathers continued to be supplied in the main from the wild regions of this same state, where a hinterland of swamp and marsh affords good nesting-ground for herons and a shooting-ground where the hunter is little likely to be interrupted.

The new law sounds encouraging; but in the light of past events and of the prolific

fictions put forth by the feather-trade, it may need some watching. The time when feathers may be "picked up" includes the breeding-season as well as the moulting-season. The new regulations are admittedly the result of a decline in the trade on account of the prohibition of importation in the United States, the campaign against the wearing of "the badge of cruelty" in Great Britain and, finally, the war. The population of the district affected—only 100,000—appealed to the Government to do something to preserve their "osprey" business, and to repeal hostile laws. As the actual moulted feather is inferior in quality, brittle and ragged, and of little use in millinery, it seems at least possible that the main desire is to throw pleasing dust in the eyes of the public and permit the revival of trade as before.

The only actual safeguard worth having is the prohibition of importation into the United Kingdom; with the advice to the people of Bolivar and Apure to find some more honest business.

IMPORTATION OF PLUMAGE.

Following on a correspondence between this Society and the Board of Trade, relative to the importation of "osprey" feathers by a certain vessel, in spite of the prohibition under the Order of March last, the Secretary of the Department of Import Restrictions has informed the Society that the importation of Egret feathers has now been absolutely prohibited, and that this prohibition extends to the plumage of all Herons, Birds-of-Paradise, Lyre Birds, Albatrosses, Condors, and Argus Pheasants.

Why exemption should be allowed for any wild-bird feathers whatsoever is still a mystery.

BIRD-MURDER IN CHINA.

Under the heading "Game-killing in China: Cold Murder and Cold Storage," the Peking correspondent of the *Times* (Nov. 28, 1917) describes the destruction of game-birds by gun, poisoned grain, net, and trap, in China to fill the cold storage of trading companies in Manchuria and on the Yangtze. There are no game laws in China, and though the export of game was forbidden until 1909, in that year the British Government was approached with a view to obtaining some relaxation of the rule, and unfortunately their negotiations with the Chinese Government resulted in the prohibition being raised for three months in each year. As a consequence game, then plentiful, is fast disappearing.

A petition, signed by many influential Chinese as well as foreigners, is consequently being prepared for presentation to the Government, urging that the export of the Pheasant and other non-migratory birds be prohibited, and also that this prohibition be extended to "the skins and plumage of birds like Egret and Kingfisher, the destruction of which for commercial purposes is fast leading to the extinction of these beautiful creatures."

China was one of the first countries where the plumage-traders located their stores of "picked-up" feathers, and Mrs. Archibald Little told in one of the Society's leaflets of the killing of the Egrets there.

Notes.

IF ever Bird-Protectors and their Society have been justified in their doings, it has surely been in the warning given last spring against the destruction of small birds and the urgent protest against the stolid stupidity of the Board of Agriculture in refusing to sow such a warning broadcast. Last winter left little need for the operations of the "sparrow club" (as commonly understood), for net, trap, or poison. The dearth of birds has been followed up by alarming increase of insect life; another such winter, another such fillip to rampant ignorance as last spring's "kill the birds" campaign, and the country will be in terrible plight. The main thing just now is to give such food as is possible to help the small birds through the winter. The importance of the bird as an ally should be recognized once and for all.

* * *

In addition to the hints for feeding birds given in the Society's leaflet, "Winter and the Birds," readers may like to experiment with palm-kernel meal, recommended by the Board of Agriculture as a cheap and plentiful food for poultry: if they can get it, or with other poultry-meals, mixed, for preference, with more familiar seed, fat, or scraps. Information as to results would be welcomed by the society. There need be no apology for using such food. Man

cannot live without the bird, as Michelet said long ago.

* * *

The Thornhill District Agricultural Committee (Dumfries) deserve full publicity for the recommendation they have recently issued to landowners to cut down all trees in and around fields under cultivation. "The presence of trees," says the circular, "not merely reduces seriously the yield of growing crops, but affords harbourage for birds which still further reduce the diminished yield. Another aspect of the question is the national need for timber and the high price now obtainable for it." The last part of the sentence is the true "canny" touch. But even the canny Scot may make an expensive blunder.

* * *

In one of the dailies Dr. Stuart Tidey, recently returned from British Columbia, comments on the fact that crops are less prolific and agriculture less flourishing there than he had anticipated. One factor he relates is "the exposure of the greater part of the cultivated land to every wind that blows, as a result of the intentional, deliberate and blind destruction of every tree or shrub that is not directly productive. The Dominion Government is at the present

moment endeavouring to instruct the farmer on the value to agriculture of adequate wind-shields." The old English farmer who planted the tree and set the sturdy hawthorn hedge about his fields, whether arable or pasture, was not a fool.

* * *

In France the absolute need of birdlife is, and has for some time been, forcing itself upon public attention. About six weeks ago, writes Mrs. Burdon from Herault, on October 12th, "in the Department of Ain, there was a plague of caterpillars, which covered the roads, stopped the tramways by filling up the rails, invaded the cottages and stopped the people working, who had to clear their paths before they could do anything. Much like the antler-moth plague in the Peak district." The Council of Maine-et-Loire have voted 1,700 fr. for the purchase and distribution, in the public and private schools of the Department, of M. Andre Godard's book, "Birds Necessary to Agriculture." Each copy is accompanied with a note asking the teachers to encourage the spirit of bird-protection among their scholars.

* * *

A correspondent sends to the Society the following incident arising out of a visit to one of the hateful bird-markets still allowed to exist in east-end thoroughfares—

"A miserable group of birdcatchers were hawking their poor wares, when to my surprise one of them picked up a bag and brought out a fine male Kestrel in beautiful plumage, and, to cut the story short, I secured the bird for a small outlay. I liberated him subsequently in St. James's Park, and after he had remained on the branch of a plane-tree for about ten minutes he ate up a piece of meat I had given him, stretched himself, hopped to a higher bough, and then was away. He wheeled once or twice, and after that was right across the sky. A very great amount of pleasure for a little sum!"

The Kestrel is one of the invaluable friends of the farmer and is "protected" all the year in London. Yet it is sold for a mere song from an east-end barrow! So much for bird-protection laws and their enforcement.

* * *

A further instance of the attention paid to this law is the advertisement which has

appeared in a number of provincial newspapers this autumn for "Wild Birds"—all kinds, including, even by name, species such as the Goldfinch, protected in the very district where the paper circulates. If this is not inciting to widespread breaches of the law, it is hard to say what could be so defined. The case having been brought to the notice of police and Press, the advertising dealer writes to the Society that "my purchases are strictly legal"—though the sale or possession of these newly caught birds in London is illegal.

* * *

A second Kestrel story and a second instance of the ways of dealers, come from other correspondents of the R.S.P.B. A Brighton resident writes: "Last winter a Kestrel visited this part of the town: once it came down almost into the garden and circled over a cat who had a young rat. The cat held on without budging, and presently the bird flew angrily away. The encounter was close to the window. No doubt the frost had made mice unobtainable in the country and driven the Kestrel into the town."

* * *

The dealer in the second instance is one of those gentlemen who describe themselves as "naturalists" but traffic not in live birds for the cage, but in dead ones for the cabinet. It was noted in various ornithological papers that the Green Sandpiper bred last summer in a certain park in Westmorland, establishing a British record. The gamekeeper thereupon received the following letter, which is forwarded to *Bird Notes and News* by Mr. H. W. Robinson, M.B.O.U.

"I see by 'British Birds' that you had the Green Sandpiper nesting with you last season. If they should do so in the coming season I will pay you more for the eggs than any one else. I am always a buyer of anything rare, either birds, their eggs, or animals. I have had Martin cats from your county. Anything I buy is between me and the seller and no one else. Shall be glad to get a line at any time."

Should the birds return to the same place, their eggs, it is satisfactory to know, will be absolutely safe from persons of this description.

The Royal Society for the Protection of Birds.

COUNCIL MEETINGS.

MEETINGS of the Council of the Society were held at the Middlesex Guildhall, S.W., on October 19th and December 7th, 1917, the Chairman, Mr. Montagu Sharpe, presiding.

Hon. Secretary's Report.

The Hon. Secretary reported the issue by the Board of Agriculture of an Order authorising the killing of certain wild birds in the open season; but as hardly any of these were protected in any county at that time, no action by the Society was called for; lectures had been given by the Rev. W. Rathbone Supple, Rev. H. Davenport Rice, Mr. C. S. Peppiette, Mr. E. E. Hankinson, Mr. Vicars Webb, Rev. H. E. Smart, Rev. J. E. Kelsall, Rev. T. Bowen Evans, Mr. G. Frisby, and Mrs. F. E. Lemon. The award in the Bird-and-Tree Challenge Shield Competitions was confirmed; and the issue of the Christmas greeting-card and of the leaflet "Winter and the Birds" notified.

Finance and General Purposes Committee.

The accounts for the third quarter of 1917 and for October and November were passed. It was announced that a legacy of £500 had been received under the will of the late Mrs. E. Phillips, from her executrix, Miss C. V. Hall, and also one of £1000 from the late Captain T. M. J. Tailby. The resignation was received with regret of Colonel Williams-Freeman as hon. sec. for Brighton and Hove. The following Fellows and Members were elected:—

FELLOWS: Miss B. Booth (Kettering); Captain H. W. Jessop (West Yorks Regiment); Mrs. W. Bertie Roberts (London,

S.W.); Miss J. H. Salkeld (Shillingstone); Miss E. G. Woodd (Eastbourne).

MEMBERS: Jas. Bartholomew (Torrance); Mrs. R. D. Bolton (Oakamoor); H. E. Bracher (Pembroke); J. F. Butterworth (Manchester); Miss Cavendish-Bentinck (Surrey); Sister Faith (London, S.E.); Horace Gautrey (Cottenham); Albert J. Harris (Exeter); Edward E. Hankinson (Manchester); H. F. Jackson (Pembroke); H. Jobbins (New Oxted); Rev. Cecil A. Jones (Royston); J. Sylvester Mason (Hull); Miss Meta McCombie, M.A. (Middlesbrough); J. S. O. Robertson-Luxford (Robertsbridge); Mrs. Richmond, F.R.H.S. (Lustleigh); Mrs. L. E. Rolleston (London, W.); Mrs. Thompson (Crowland); Sir Thomas Troubridge, Bart. (London, W.); Mrs. Venning (Heamoor); Hon. John Wallop (Morchard Bishop).

LIFE MEMBER: The Earl of Eldon.

Professor Gordon Hewitt, D.Sc., was elected an Hon. Fellow.

Gold Medal.

It was proposed by the Chairman, and unanimously agreed to, that the Society's Gold Medal be awarded to Professor Gordon Hewitt, Dominion Entomologist, Ottawa, and to Dr. W. T. Hornaday, New York Zoological Park, in recognition of their indefatigable services in securing the Treaty between Canada and the United States for the Protection of Migratory Birds. When Lecturer in Economic Zoology at Manchester University Dr. Gordon Hewitt gave invaluable help to the cause of bird protection on economic grounds. It was through his reports that nesting-boxes for birds were established at Thirlmere to check the larch-disease; and at the meeting of the British Association in 1908 he brought forward the question of an enquiry into the food of birds, which would doubtless have accomplished

more had he remained in England. He has since done yeoman service to the cause in Canada. Dr. Hornaday, as the untiring protagonist of wild-life protection in the States, led the fight which resulted in the prohibition of importation of plumage into America; and his name is familiar to all workers in this country

Birds at the Lighthouse.

A letter was read from the President of the Audubon Association of the Pacific, stating that the Society's work in providing bird-rests at the lighthouses had attracted considerable attention among those interested in birds as well as the Lighthouse service; and asking for advice and suggestions in the work of providing similar rests in that district, as it has been brought to the notice of the Audubon Association and of the Cooper Ornithological Club that quite a number of birds were destroyed at certain of the lighthouses. It was agreed that every assistance be afforded in the matter.

General Business.

Letters from correspondents in several British colonies were read, dealing with the destruction of Herons for their plumage and with the feather trade; also a correspondence between the Society and the Board of Trade respecting the importation of "ospreys" into England since the issue of the Order of February last; and papers with reference to the new regulations in Venezuela. Other subjects discussed included the suggestion to establish a Chair of Economic Ornithology at one of the universities; the proposed collection of certain wild birds' eggs for food next spring, and correspondence

with the Scottish Office in regard thereto; Bird-Protection at Blakeney Point and elsewhere; and the reported shooting of Spoonbills in Dorset. It was agreed that the Chairman's signature be appended to a letter to the Right Hon. H. A. L. Fisher, Minister of Education, urging that in any new Education Bill a definite place be given to humane teaching in all schools under the Department

OBITUARY.

Mr. Elliot Downs Till, of Eynsford, who died on October 4th, at the age of 82, will always be associated with one of the most fruitful branches of the work of the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds—that of nature-teaching in the schools through the institution of "Bird-and-Tree" Competitions and Festivals. Mr. Till was the founder of "Arbor Day" in England (to give the name adopted in the United States and in our own colonies), introducing it as a yearly festival at Eynsford in 1887; and in 1902 he won the R.S.P.B. award for the essay on the best means of establishing "Bird and Arbor Day" in England. The most zealous of fighters and most genial of enthusiasts for everything tending to promote the amenities of country life—whether the erection of picturesque cottages or the levelling of unsightly hoardings—his interest in the Society's work was always keen; and his last act was to give a special donation to the Leaflet Fund on condition of twenty other donors giving a like amount. He did not live to know of the success of the appeal. A resolution expressing the Council's sense of the loss it has sustained through his death was placed on the minutes at the meeting of the Council on October 19th.

Members of the society and others familiar with the society's greeting-cards will feel more than ordinary sorrow at the news of the death on the western front of Mr. H. E. O. Murray-Dixon, whose pictures of the white Doves on the card of 1914, and of the Kestrel, in illustration of the Hon. Julian Grenfell's noble lines, on that of 1915, were so much admired. Mr. Murray-Dixon was a second-lieutenant in the Seaforth Highlanders.

Another loss to the ornithological world is that of Mr. F. Goodyear, jun., R.E., one of whose letters home was published in *Bird Notes and News*, and who would no doubt have made his mark as a student of the birds he loved and observed so well.

SPECIAL LEAFLET FUND.

IN response to the conditional offer of the late Mr. Till of a guinea donation to assist in the printing and circulation of "Birds, Insects, and Crops," and other publications dealing with the economic value of birds, a generous response has been received from the following friends of the cause—

Lady Theodora Guest, Lady Laura Ridding, Mrs. Ashton Allen, Miss Wright Anderson, Mrs. Stratton Boulnois, Mr. J. A. Brooke, Miss Clifton, Mrs. Close, Mr. H. Collison, Miss E. Colman, Miss H. Colman, Sir William Cooper, C.I.E., Mr. Fleming Crooks, Miss Garnett, Captain H. S. Gladstone, Mr. J. H. Gurney, Mr. W. P. Hiern, Sir Alfred Jodrell, Mrs. Johnston, Miss C. A. L. Jones, Dr. Longstaff, Dr. Penrose, Mrs. R. H. S. Scott, Lady Shelley, Miss Stewart, Mr. Edgar Syers, Mrs. Wallis Toller, Mr. R. W. Waller.

Greeting Card, 1917-8.

THE appropriateness and beauty of Mr. Thorburn's picture of the Robin "Behind the Lines" have given the society's greeting-card wide distribution. It is proposed to

sell the original picture by auction at the society's annual meeting, for the benefit of the funds. A choice of special verses ensured the card additional favour; besides those printed on the card, the following touching lines, by Mr. Trevor-Battye, have been supplied as an "inset," or for use separately.

CHRISTMAS IN THE LINES.

1917.

*It comes in legend down the centuries
That when the World's Redeemer hung to die,
A little pitying bird flew up to move
The Crown of Agony.*

*All snow-white was its breast! but even as
In gentle flutterings it vainly tried
To lift the torture of the piercing thorn,
That wounded breast was dyed.*

This is the story of the Redbreast.

Here

*It brings our loved the England that they
know,
And sings from this or that small wooden cross,
Set in a drift of snow,*

*Sleep, after faith unbroken,
Sleep, after service done;
Safely home at close of day
And setting of the sun.*

*Sleep, with the bugle calling
Reveille to the day;
The fighting and the weariness
Have passed for thee away.*

*Bells are a-peal in England,
Under a village spire;
There is holly, there are children,
And the singing of the choir;*

*And hearts are beating proudly,
Although the eyes may weep;
They know thy gallant story,
Sleep, boy, untroubled, sleep.*

No mention? See, on waking!

No medal? Let it be—

*A King shall meet thee, bringing
His shining Star for thee.*

Economic Ornithology.

THE SCARCITY OF BIRDS.

ALL country dwellers noticed how the birds were suffering in the bitter weather of last winter, but the extent of the disaster that befell them has never been so apparent as it is now during the interval between the departure of the summer migrants and the arrival of our visitors from the north. Not for a great many years has the country been so denuded of the familiar birds of the garden and the hedgerow as it is to-day. Blackbirds and thrushes, hedge-sparrows and robins may be counted by twos and threes where, in former autumns, there were hundreds, and the tits and Jenny wrens, birds one had come to consider proof against the severe frost, must have succumbed in immense numbers to the combined effect of cold and hunger. They have had a whole season in which to recuperate, all of them are notoriously prolific in eggs and young, and yet their scarcity is more marked now than it was when the frost and east wind abated last spring.

This is not due to any indiscriminate campaign of boys against eggs of the sort that was freely and foolishly suggested at the beginning of the birds' nesting season. Misdirected efforts of that kind were, happily, only sporadic, and did not materialise at all in most districts; it would rather appear that, apart from the actual destruction caused by the winter, those birds that survived the ordeal began the season with their vitality much lowered and have not reproduced their kind with anything like their usual freedom. With the breeding-stock so much depleted, the occurrence of a second severe winter would go near to emptying the country of these resident birds, that depend, wholly or in part, upon insect food.

It is worth while to notice two results of this great destruction that have already become very apparent. The first was a plague of caterpillars that, in many districts, almost stripped the trees of their leaves at the beginning of the summer. These caterpillars emerged from eggs, laid in the early spring by moths of several species, the

females of which are mostly apterous. In a normal year the tits and wrens search for these spider-like females with tireless energy, and, by devouring them before their eggs are laid, cut off the supply of caterpillars at the source. Judging by the number of insects that must have survived to come to maturity this year, there is a prospect of great havoc amongst leaves and blossoms next spring, unless, as may happen, migration fills up the depleted ranks of the insect eaters. . . .

The second most marked result of the destruction among the birds is of a different sort, and has caused most gardeners to rub their hands with pleasure, for there has never been a season when the fruit has needed so little protection. . . .

Not unnaturally, in these circumstances the average gardener is crowing over the *advocatus avium*, and pointing, with triumph, to his orchards. He may usefully be reminded of a remark of Sir Robert Walpole when the people were rejoicing at a popular declaration of war. "They may ring the bells now," said the sage old statesman; "they will soon be wringing their hands!" It is better to lose even a considerable proportion of your fruit from the attacks of birds than to have none to lose owing to the worm i' the bud.

"She's a rum 'un, is Natur'," said Mr. Squeers in a philosophic moment, and it is unsafe to indulge in prophecies where she is concerned; but, judging from the disproportion between our insect foes and our bird friends, it seems probable that next summer will prove a trying one for the gardener, and it might be worth his while to encourage, so far as the Food Controller will permit, such garden birds as have escaped the destruction of 1917.—*The Times*, Oct. 9, 1917.

"SPARROW CLUBS" AND THEIR EFFECTS.

THERE is a serious diminution in the numbers of many birds, which might easily become alarming if it were not for the

rapidity with which they multiply when protected from their natural enemies. The shortage was not so manifest in summer when the summer migrants were with us, for the numbers of the visitors were not perceptibly less than usual. But now that the swallows, the swifts, and the warblers have gone, it is easy to see how thinned have been the ranks of our native birds. For this shortage there have been two causes. Of these one was beyond control. The other was avoidable, and it can be averted in future.

The unavoidable cause was the intense severity of last winter. The number of birds killed by cold and hunger was incalculable and almost incredible. . . .

. . . If this were the only cause of scarcity the evil might not have been so bad. Careful and discriminating protection during recent years under the Wild Birds Protection Acts had so encouraged valuable bird life that the mischief was not irreparable. But hard on the heels of this unusual winter came the most determined onslaught on birds and their eggs ever known, an organised and successful attempt to reduce their numbers which still further depleted the sadly shaken ranks.

This onslaught was in its conception wise, but in its results it was lamentable. . . . The Board of Agriculture urged the formation of sparrow clubs, and throughout the land these clubs sprang up. The many thousands of birds and eggs destroyed in a single parish by a single club was an index of the extent of the destruction, and, if it had been—if it could have been—confined to sparrows, no harm, but much good, in the shape of unrifled crops, would have been the result.

What actually happened was an indiscriminate destruction of small birds in general. The causes were three. In the first place, the suggestions of the Board of Agriculture left open a loophole of which advantage was promptly taken. The method recommended to ensure destruction was to offer payment for all sparrows and sparrows' eggs: threepence a dozen for birds fully grown, twopence a dozen for young sparrows, and a penny a dozen for eggs. The offer of money for immature birds proved to be

disastrous. Schoolboys were delighted to be set free on work which usually they had to do in secret. All small birds when unfledged are much alike, and nobody was going to inquire too closely whether the birds captured were sparrows or not. Again, many well-meaning and enthusiastic but ignorant persons (ignorant, that is, on this particular subject) — parsons, lawyers, doctors, and others—improved upon the suggestions by offering rewards (doubtless believing in all honesty that they were helping in a good work) for the destruction not merely of sparrows, but in some cases of birds of the greatest utility and in defiance of the local protection orders. And, further, under cover of the legitimate campaign against sparrows, many countrymen, farmers, smallholders, and gardeners, who hold stubbornly to the belief that birds are their natural enemies, dealt destruction all round with impunity.

A SERIOUS OUTLOOK.

The result of these twin causes is lamentable. The larger birds, with the exception of lapwings, have survived. But the scarcity of smaller birds is almost appalling. Normally, in the late autumn, you cannot enter a stubble field without disturbing clouds of finches; starlings pack in flocks of countless thousands; and lapwings are to be found in parties of several hundreds. This autumn, the clouds of finches are reduced to parties of a dozen or a score; a train journey across the whole length of southern England revealed but four flights of starlings, and these not more than fifty or sixty in number; and if in the south you see a grouping of a hundred peewits it is a notable thing.

It is a serious outlook. If the ensuing winter is a mild one, all may be well, but even in that case the policy of destruction surely needs reconsideration in two respects. Payment for the taking of immature birds should be forbidden, and it should be impressed upon local authorities and upon the organisers of sparrow clubs far more vigorously than in the Board of Agriculture Leaflet No. 84 that the indiscriminate destruction of small insect-eating birds would be a national disaster. Truly sparrows eat the ripening ears of corn, but without

the birds which keep down plagues of insects, grubs, and wireworms, crops may be imperilled at the very outset. In short, let us kill the sparrows, who are the source of the mischief, but let every authority concerned see to it that it really is the sparrow we kill, and that all other destruction shall be discouraged and punished.—*The Observer*, Nov. 25, 1917.

THE WAR FARMER'S ALLY.

A FEW years ago it was reported that a great diminution was taking place in the number of lapwings in Great Britain, and the Board of Agriculture thought the subject important enough to make the matter one of inquiry. The evidence which it obtained from its honorary correspondents was to the effect that in 47 districts of England there was a marked decrease, and in only 12 an increase; while in Scotland a decrease was reported from 24 districts and an increase from only 5. No details of locality were given in the magazine of the Board, but it was generally indicated that the decrease was due to an increasingly systematic collection of the eggs for marketing; and there is a presumption that this took place in the districts best situated for getting the eggs to market.

There is a presumption, moreover, that the lapwing, like some other species, has suffered from the war, and that the process of reduction noted before the war has been accelerated. It will be remembered that last spring the public were officially urged, in the interest of food conservation, to make the fullest possible use of the eggs of wild birds. The lapwing was indicated as furnishing the best eggs of all, and the merits of the eggs of the various species of gulls were preached from high quarters. That these official urgings were responded to in the case of the gulls I know, and it is probable that they stimulated attention to the lapwing, which produces better eggs for the purposes of the table than any gull.

Watching a flock of lapwings at food on a ploughed field the other day, I saw reason to think short-sighted the policy which urged the consumption of this bird's eggs in the interest of food supply. The lapwing is one of those rare birds against whose character as an ally

of the agriculturist no word has ever been breathed. Its works are all good, and there is not even the usual little balance of evil. It does not eat corn; it leaves green crops severely alone. Its quest is solely for animal food.

AN ILL-BALANCED TRANSACTION.

The field referred to was one of those grass parks from whose conversion into corn lands we expect so much. Quite clearly the lapwings were finding it rich ground, and it is a well-known fact that from their standpoint, and that of all grub-eating birds, there is no ground to equal grass-land which has just been broken up. Such ground is richer in vermin than any other. It forms a great sanctuary for the larvæ of those insects which have, so to put it, a three years' course in the ground. In regularly cultivated land the ground is thoroughly disturbed by plough, harrow, and cultivator every year, and a large proportion of its larval inhabitants are either directly destroyed or exposed to the insect-eating birds. In the grass-land they accumulate, and the grass-field, as a matter of certainty, will contain the grubs in three-yearly stages of development of such insects as the click beetle, known in the grub stage as the wire-worm. Wire-worms are prime favourites of the lapwings, and in the over-turned turf they were picking out the tough dainties with the utmost zest and enthusiasm.

The farmers who last spring turned over grass had practical demonstration in the following months of the great abundance in such ground of insect pests. In some cases entire fields of young grain were destroyed and had to be resown.

There are four eggs in the lapwing's brood, and a very moderate appetite would dispose of the four for breakfast. Each of these potential lapwings was capable of destroying many thousands of wire-worms, leather-jackets, and other noxious insect larvæ; and each grub in the thousands is itself capable of destroying more food than we can get in a lapwing's egg. Economically considered, the destruction of the eggs, even for food, of so entirely useful a bird as the lapwing, is sheer nonsense.—*Dundee Advertiser*, Nov. 21, 1917.

Bird-and-Tree Challenge Shield Competition.

THE extreme importance of teaching children a practical knowledge of Birds, and appreciation of the value of bird life, is being emphasised anew every day; and similar teaching is only less imperative in the case of Trees. It is impossible to do more in this number of *Bird Notes and News* than record the results of the competitions for 1917; but it is hoped that every effort will be made to stimulate this method of nature-study in the spring, and it is intended in the Spring Number to give a few hints to new teams and young cadets. The competition of 1917 has been very satisfactory in view of the difficulties in the way. The Swallow proved the favourite bird: perhaps testimony to the joy with which the belated spring was greeted.

The judges of the essays were: Mr. Montague Sharpe (Chairman of Council), Miss Clifton, Mrs. Frederick Dawson, Mr. G. A. Freeman, B.Sc., Mr. W. H. Hudson, Mr. Hastings Lees, Mr. J. R. B. Masefield, Rev. W. A. Shaw, Rev. J. G. Tuck, Mr. Meade-Waldo, and Miss Gardiner (secretary).

INTER-COUNTY SHIELD.

TEN teams, as winners of the highest places in the County Competitions, were entered this year for the Inter-County Shield. Since its institution this Shield has been won by Hampshire (twice, Privett and St. Peter's Girls', Bournemouth), Somerset (Long Ashton), Berkshire (Buckland), Northants (Wellingborough Council School), Bedfordshire (twice, Woburn Boys'), Bucks (Wolverton St. Mary), and Norfolk (twice). This year it is again awarded to Norfolk. The Little Dunham boys and girls write with delightful enthusiasm, and show surprising ability to note the characteristic features of both Birds and Trees. The second place is taken by Hampshire, the extent and quality of Barton Stacey's first-hand observation proving both zeal and patience. These two teams send in precisely the sort of work which the society desires to stimulate.

COUNTY CHALLENGE SHIELDS.

BUCKINGHAMSHIRE.—*Challenge Shield*: Tyringham-cum-Filgrave School. This school

has been working its way up for some time, and the essays show real insight, observation, and appreciation; the matter is all good, though it is not well arranged. The birds are Swan, Starling, Wood-Pigeon, and Chaffinch; the trees Sycamore, Larch, and Holly. Prince's Risboro' and Ellesborough, both winners of the Shield in past years, send in some excellent papers, remarkably well written and sympathetic; while Pitstone is advancing on right lines and shows how well boys of nine and ten years can do. These three schools take *certificates* of excellence.

CUMBERLAND.—*Challenge Shield*: Buttermere School, which repeats its triumph of last year, although a very small school. St. John's Girls', Keswick, doubtless suffered from loss of the head mistress, but should soon regain its old form, as two teams evidence admirable nature-study. Cargo, which may run the leaders in Cumberland hard next year if its improvement continues, also wins a *certificate* this year; and Nether Denton is another notably promising team. Once again the county shines by reason of its varied list of birds studied, thus giving distinct interest to the papers; and the artistic work is good.

HAMPSHIRE.—*Challenge Shield*: Barton Stacey (second year). In a county where composition is so strong it is probably a surprise to all concerned to find the Shield awarded for two years running to the same village school. There is constant friendly rivalry among half a dozen leading teams, with also a good chance that one previously less regarded may with a sudden effort come in first. The contest between Barton Stacey and the team from St. Peter's Girls', Bournemouth, which wins *second prize*, is curiously close this year. All the writers are girls, the average age the same, the selected birds are similar species. Both are admirable sets of essays, full of information, displaying keen interest, and gracefully written. The winning Bird-essays deal with Goldfinch, Pied Wagtail, and Long-tailed Tit. Bournemouth's drawings are particularly

good. *Certificates* are won by the Holme School, Headley; Ridge; and the Western Boys' School, Southampton. Brightstone, I.W., Hale, Hayling, Hinton Ampner, Swanmore, and Wickham are *highly commended*.

LANCASHIRE.—*Challenge Shield*: Atherton C.E. School, whose essays, on a good level of accuracy and neatness, are accompanied by admirable drawings. Withnell U.M. ranks *second* with fresh and pleasant papers, High Wray achieves the feat of attaining almost to front rank in a first attempt; and St. Stephen's, Preston, is little below the best. Next to the winners of certificates come Bamber Bridge, Bolton-le-Sands, Brathay District, Cartmel Fell, and Heskin, all *highly commended*; Barton Newsham R.C., Brow Edge, Mawdesley R.C., Parbold Douglas, and Scarisbrick Township are *commended*. Lancashire has done very well in respect of numbers this year, though, as in most counties, the teams are younger than usual, and, as a natural corollary, the standard of work not so high as that of last year.

NORFOLK. — *Challenge Shield*: Little Dunham School, already mentioned as deserving winners of the Inter-County Shield. It is pleasant to find an increase in the number of competing schools, and general excellence of first-hand observation. A capital variety of subjects is also noticeable. The *second* and *third* places are occupied by Tittleshall, particularly good in Trees, and Great Dunham Girls'. Close to these comes Postwick, sympathetic and original in its work and notable for the attention paid to bird-notes; while *certificates* are awarded likewise to the Loddon Girls', Heydon, St. Faith's, Melton Constable, and Briston and Necton. In the next class, *highly commended*, come Beechamwell (Shield-winner last year), Brockdish, Ketteringham, Long Stratton, Mattishall, Toftwood, Tompson, Wickmere, and Wolverton; and some half-dozen are *commended*.

NORTHAMPTONSHIRE. — *Challenge Shield*: All Saints School (girls), Wellingborough. Last year there was some keen rivalry between the girls' and boys' teams from Wellingborough; the girls on that occasion were distinctly best, but this year it is rather

difficult to say which leads, though there is no doubt as to the two standing at the head of the Northants teams. On the whole the girls have it. All the papers are brightly and intelligently written. The third place is taken by Middleton Cheney, which is strong enough to provide three teams; there is a pleasant tone about the work and a capital amount of observation. *Certificates* go to Badby, Croughton, Polebrooke, Ravensthorpe, and Welton; while Clopton, Culworth, Harlestone, Hemington, Overstone, and Sudborough are *highly commended*, and other teams *commended*.

SOMERSET.—*Challenge Shield*: Chillington. Somerset's teams are nearly all very young this year, and two or three leading schools are unfortunately absent altogether; but freshness and spontaneity are again conspicuous in the interesting papers. The judges can only wish that perseverance were as notable a feature of Somerset schools. Frome Girls' Council School, an older team and Shield-winner last year, takes the position of *Champion* school, and the Shield goes to Chillington with charmingly sympathetic essays, the Birds being Brown Owl, House-Martin, and Lesser Whitethroat. Winsham and Chedington are awarded *certificates*. North Perrott and Wambrook are *highly commended*.

WARWICKSHIRE.—*Challenge Shield*: Dosthill Council School. Warwickshire maintains its standard of excellence well, and Dosthill has no easy task in securing first place, though the team's Bird papers are uncommonly good, and those on Trees manifest only too much labour in their painstaking detail. Mancetter, one of the youngest teams in the county, comes wonderfully close up, its Tree essays being particularly intelligent. There is also excellent first-hand work in essays from Ansley, Minworth, and Great Alne, which receive *certificates*; Hasclor, Rowington, Solihull Girls', and Temple Grafton are *highly commended*, and mention may also be made of Studley R.C., a promising newcomer. Great Alne, Hasclor, and Temple Grafton are strong in nature-drawings.

OPEN CLASS.—The work in the Open Class is stronger than usual this year, and

the competition closer. A Sussex school which has for several years done good work, Slindon, wins *first prize* with extremely careful and intelligent papers. *Certificates* go to former winners, Hinton Waldrist (Berks) and Totley (Derbyshire), and also to Bradway-Norton (Derbyshire), Easton-Portland (Dorset), Felixstowe Ferry (Suffolk), and Greenlanes (Clontarf, Dublin). It is very pleasant to welcome two Irish teams this year, and to find Greenlanes doing such admirable work, while Carrowbeg (Donegal) is but little behind; both have grasped the intention of the competition remarkably well, and so too has another new team, Gazeley (Suffolk). These two, with the Bouverie-Pusey School, Charney (Berks), are *highly commended*.

SPECIAL PRIZES.—More essays enter for the "Owl" competition than in any previous year, though the bird is not easy for a child to study, and much intelligent effort has been put forth. Prizes are awarded to the lively and interesting papers by Arthur Keen (Great Alne, Warwickshire) and Louisa Steer (Chedington, Somerset). Half a dozen others are *commended*.—A prize for best observation of the work of birds in the garden goes to George H. Thomson (Dosthill), who has taken good note of the Blue Tit's habits.

A large number of Bird-and-Tree Festivals were held during the fortnight preceding Christmas, including those of Atherton and Witnall (Lancashire Shield and Second Prize Teams), Dosthill and Mancetter (Shield and Second Prize, Warwickshire), Frome Girls' Council School (Second Prize, Somerset). In nearly every case programmes of appropriate songs and recitations were furnished by the children. At Ridge (Hants) the prizes were presented by Mrs. Wilfred Ashley, of Broadlands, and an interesting address on the life and work of Lady Mount-Temple was given by Mr. F. Holme-Sumner. — At Prince's Risborough (Bucks) a cantata and songs were well rendered, and the Head Master, in a practical address, appealed to the audience to feed the birds as much as possible during the cold weather, as their economic value in destroying insects injurious to crops could not be over-estimated.

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To Members of the Society subscribing 5s. and upwards per annum it is forwarded gratis and post free.

Printed by WITHERBY & Co., 326, High Holborn, W.C.1., and published by the ROYAL SOCIETY FOR THE PROTECTION OF BIRDS, 23, Queen Anne's Gate, S.W.1.

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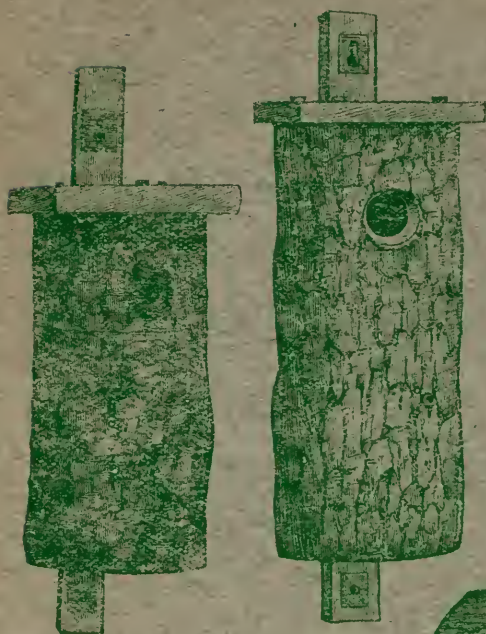


Fig. A.

Fig. B.

Tree-
Hole
Boxes.



Fig. F.



Fig. W., the "Walden."



Fig. E.

Walden
Boxes.



Fig N. 6d.

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